

From Harvard to Homelessness ... And Beyond

A Jungian/Archetypal Understanding

By Kai Charles Forest

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Part I – Sources of Homelessness

Introduction Dancing Through Darkness

Through various disasters, through so many life and death situations

We are holding our course towards Latium, the place where the Fates are showing us

Quiet safe homes. THAT is where it is religiously proper

For the kingdoms of Troy to rise again.

Stand firm, stay alive, and keep yourselves safe for better things. [\[1\]](#)

It was March 20, 2004. As I spread my sleeping bag on the steps of my church at 11 pm that Saturday night, I

wondered how I had gotten here. A straight-A student in high school, a Harvard graduate, it seemed like the world should have been full of promise for me. And yet something had gone wrong, terribly wrong. I had worked hard and trusted in the American dream, yet here I was – homeless, almost all of my possessions gone, out of resources, out on the street. Had I failed it? Had it failed me? I didn't know.

Mostly I didn't reflect on this that night. Mostly I focused on staying centered and staying alive. As the night passed, I hoped that the – reputedly tolerant – urban police of this very liberal city wouldn't hassle me. As a few passersby (both male and female) sought to possess my body and – as bad or worse – my soul, I prayed for safety. Over and over again I recited what I remembered of Psalm 91, the psalm of protection I had recited – in safer physical circumstances, in my own home – at night for many years. Over and over again I reached out to this church I had loved for many years, that I had thought to be a spiritual home. Now I was sleeping on its steps. Soon it was to cast me out and abandon me.

As the night passed, I didn't have much time or energy for reflection. Just wave after wave of fear, driving the fear back over and over again with prayer and Psalm.

As the night passed and the fog rolled in, I went into a sort of semi-doze. I think I had gotten maybe two and a half hours of sleep that night. I was not totally out of money so as dawn came I was able to go to a grocery store, buy some breakfast, sit on a bench. One of the several ministers of this large urban church passed me by and was horrified. I knew that in that one night on the street my viewpoint – and, for then, my appearance – had changed forever. He invited me to come to the church. But that was as far as I got. The church that I had loved for many years was about to cast me out – to ignore me, denigrate me, make me into a non-person.

How had I gotten here? How had my employment history, my church, my culture, gotten here? I couldn't ponder this that night. That was the survival mechanism kicking in. I couldn't ponder this for three years. The wound was too deep; it hurt too much.

But I could start thinking and writing about it in 2007. And, faced with homelessness again, I could continue

thinking and writing about it in 2010. That is what this book is about: what led to – and out of – that one night on the street; what led to recurring incidents of being on the edge of homelessness over and over again. And how to come through such times alive.

I am a survivor of extreme early abuse. Many chapters will deal with the consequences of trauma and their relationship to a pattern of homelessness. The goal is not to dwell in the darkness. The goal is to come out of the darkness into the light. As Matthew 4 describes the coming of Jesus, quoting the words of Isaiah the prophet:

The people who have dwelt in darkness
Have seen a great light
Unto those dwelling in the land and the shadow of death
A light has arisen.

But the darkness cannot be denied. The darkness must be acknowledged and passed through. Whatever metaphor is used for the darkness – “the night sea journey”, the nigredo, the passage through the Red Sea, and many, many others – it is not a place for staying. It is not a place of healing. It is not a safe, secure dwelling place. It is a place of death. It is a place of disasters, a place of life and death crises, just as Vergil describes it in the Aeneid. ^[2] Like the labyrinth, which – as Kerenyi notes – “when closed is indeed a place of death,” it must be passed through.

The open labyrinth, is, however, a place of healing and transformation. The initiates at Eleusis made a symbolic passage through this darkness each year. And, says Kerenyi, there is ample evidence to show how they passed through: they *danced* their way through the darkness. ^[3]

How can this be done? Again: by not denying the darkness – by awareness of the reality of the darkness – by *passing through* the darkness.

That is the purpose of this book. There is a lot of darkness both in my story and in the stories of hope I tell in Part II. Stay with them. I am not telling these stories to dwell in darkness. I am telling these stories to help myself, and – I hope – to help others, to pass through the darkness – most especially, to pass through that darkness that comes from loss of home, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual home, and to come out to the other side, the other side of darkness, to true home. As one of Jean-Paul Sartre’s characters says in “Les Mouches” – “The Flies”: “La vie commence de l’autre cote du desespoir” – “life begins on the other side of despair.”

Chapter 1 - My Story

“I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me to drink. I was a wandering stranger and you took me in. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you visited me.”

-- Matthew 25

Trying To Survive

My story really begins many years ago, with a childhood that included extreme abuse of many sorts. From the outside it looked calm and “normal”; from the inside it looked bleak – indeed life-threatening – and hopeless. The only refuge and defense against that - and I mercifully had amnesia regarding most of it; I did not remember until many years later when I started recovering memories - was intellectual achievement, which for a very long time segued easily into intellectual arrogance. On top of a feeling of utter worthlessness, there was a layer of intellectual grandiosity.

No one ever got past that layer. It was a defense against homelessness, starvation, death – all manifestations of the Terrible Mother energy, as will be explained later - and it worked ... for a while. Long enough, at any rate, to get me past childhood and adolescence and into adulthood. And for that I am profoundly grateful.

But I never felt like I deserved to exist in this world, or that there was a place for me on this planet. This is a common feeling for survivors of extreme abuse. But for many years I was not even aware of having this feeling, let alone its cause.

After a Harvard education in classical languages and comparative religion, knowing that I was drawn to both Jungian psychology and Christianity, I turned away from all these, and for many years lived in a state of total disharmony with my own true nature. I found no way of connecting who I truly was with the world of money, the world of work – the world of this culture's physical home. Like many other liberal arts graduates of the time (early 1980s), when - for example - Harvard Ph.D.'s were driving taxis to survive, I simply concluded that this culture had no place for me - for me as I truly am - economically.

So I drew on a long-ago interest in mathematics and logic, and trained to become a computer programmer, a profession I was in full-time for about seven years. That was my introduction to the business world, and - after a five-year hiatus during which, like the Prodigal Son, I spent all my inheritance - I returned to high tech as a technical writer, an activity in which I remained for about nine years, until (as described later in this chapter) I was caught in the horrible series of layoffs in the early 2000s. High tech had become the only way that I had known to economically survive. But it was not home.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament notes in Chapter 11 that all of those who were asked by God to follow the way of faith, rather than the obvious way of the material world, were given the opportunity to return to their old way, if they had wanted to. Shortly after returning to high tech I had a dream that, unlike Moses, I was leading my people, not forward to the Promised Land, but back to slavery and darkness and brokenness. But I kept on with it. I saw no other way.

The Desert

Early in 2003 I was working at a technical writing contract, when suddenly, for reasons unknown (but later, I

discovered, something to do with my – somewhat eclectic – Christian spirituality) someone with whom I had worked in harmony for the past year took it upon himself to wage a vendetta against me -- a successful vendetta, as it turned out. He succeeded in driving me out of the company by the end of that summer. Fortunately, I was able to find a new contract very quickly. But that too ended unexpectedly six weeks later.

As an independent contractor, I was unable to collect unemployment – one of the many ways in which companies cut costs by exploiting defenseless, desperate workers (and I include myself) who have no recourse but to allow themselves to be named “contractors” to survive. My bioparents were long since dead. I had no siblings or close relatives or significant others to help out financially or to take up the slack.

Over the next several months, I watched my resources dwindle and the amenities of my life disappear. First to go was my cell phone. Then I stopped watching (though I still paid for) cable TV. I had stopped driving my car several months before, even before the problems at work. So losing car insurance didn't seem like a great loss. I wasn't driving my car anyway. That led to a dead battery, which I couldn't afford to fix. And I didn't really value my possessions or my home, so losing renters' insurance was no big deal either. I tried not to think about the fact that over the past twenty-five years I had paid something like a quarter of a million dollars in rent – because I could not afford a down payment. There was no room for me in this culture, and I tried to totally numb out. I have never used substances, so my form of numbing out was emotional. No big deal. Like Sinclair in Hesse's *Demian*, if my gifts/talents/abilities found no place in this culture, too bad, no big deal – “mochte die Welt den Schaden tragen” – literally, “let the world [the culture] bear the damage.” It was a way to assuage the bitterness.

Or so I thought, or wanted to think. The continuing truncation of my life was taking an unadmitted and unacknowledged toll. On a very deep level it was so painful that I couldn't let in that it was truly happening.

But then health insurance went. And then the day came, which I had dreaded for months, when, after thirteen years in the same apartment, thirteen years of paying my rent every month on time, I did not have money for rent. The people at the rental office in this huge apartment complex did their best to help me within the limits of what was possible for a large, impersonal bureaucracy. What this actually

meant was that I received some, but not all, of the paperwork for an eviction. The apartment staff – some of whom had known me for that entire thirteen years, long before the apartment building had been bought out by a huge real estate company - stretched a point and I was able to stay longer than would usually be the case, almost three weeks. It was a terrible time, and I thank them in my heart for doing the best they could. Unexpectedly, I sold my very old car - miraculously, within a few hours of advertising it – for a very low price and this gave me some money to tide me over, to buy food. But it was not enough to pay my rent.

And so that final day came. I was shut down emotionally. totally numb. I don't think I could have survived it otherwise. I turned in my key, took my two bags and my backpack - far too heavy, and impossible to carry for long distances without the help of passersby - and got on the bus that took me to a public transit station where I boarded a commuter train to a nearby urban area.

I was homeless.

My first stop was at my therapist's office – who, out of great compassion for my poverty, was working with me for free - where we prayed together and talked together until it was time for me to go to the home of a recovery friend, who was giving me shelter overnight. It was a Friday night, and I had planned to go camping the following two nights. But it didn't work out that way. I spent most of Saturday in a beautiful natural area where I had gone hiking many times, but the weight of my bags was prohibitive.

I was able to sit on a bench, though, among the trees and study Scripture. A couple visiting from Yosemite talked to me about camping opportunities there, and I filed this away in my mind as yet another indication that camping was a deep part of my path, even if it wasn't manifesting directly on that day. As yet another indication that – despite the bleakness of the moment – that I had a future. As in the prophet Jeremiah: “to give you a future and a hope.”

Church

But I knew I couldn't spend the night there. Where was my hope? I believed I could find it at my church. So I made my way back to the urban church which I had attended regularly for over thirteen years, and of which I had been a member for nine years - a church that had a reputation of being extremely politically conscious and on the front lines of various causes for social justice. Over the years, I had contributed many thousands, if not tens of thousands,

of dollars, to help it do its work in the world. It had always also impressed me as a deeply religious church in a very open way, and this is what had drawn me to it many years before. If you are not a churchgoer – and I wasn't for many years – and the church aspect of this story doesn't resonate, simply substitute “family” or “friends” or some other group you deeply trust. It was well into the evening by the time I got there. After some walking around in the general area, I went to a restaurant where I ate potatoes and used the bathroom shortly before they closed at 11 pm.

Then I returned to my church, spread out my sleeping bag on the steps, and prepared to spend the night outside. It was probably the scariest thing I have ever done.

As the night passed, and the fog rolled in, and buses rode noisily up and down the street, I prayed a lot for protection. I think I probably got about 2 or 3 hours of sleep that night, all told, but with God's help I made it through the night safely.

As day dawned, I realized that I needed to eat breakfast, and fortunately had money for food. Slowly, dazed, I crawled out of my sleeping bag and picked up my possessions. At around 8 am, sitting on a bench, surrounded by my possessions, feeling tired, knowing that in that one night on the street my perceptions had changed radically and for all time, one of the ministers of the church, who had known of my situation, saw me and came up to me. He looked at me with compassion and told me that, though the first service wouldn't start for an hour, it was OK for me to go to the church and warm myself up, and that he would see me there soon. In a haze, I went to the church, not exactly knowing what to expect.

Excursus

A multiple-choice question for ministers and other spiritual leaders:

If a member of my congregation becomes homeless, I:

- a) Take them home with me and take them in and help them myself directly
- b) Find someone in my congregation to take them in and help them
- c) Refer them to the social service specialist in my congregation
- d) Refer them to social service agencies by making or suggesting phone calls to people I know
- e) Print out a sheaf of Web pages, hand them to my (former?) congregant, and tell them to have a great life
- f) Ignore them and shun them as much as I can, because they scare me

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says to his disciples – past, present, and future – that they have actually met Him many times:

“I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me to drink. I was a wandering stranger and you took me in. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you visited me.”

It's amazing how often in sermons “I was a stranger and you took me in” is conveniently overlooked. Giving people food and water, visiting them in prison, even caring for them when they are sick do not require the level of devotion, generosity, and perhaps time commitment that taking strangers - and that is what the text says, “stranger” - into one's own home requires. In “The Sacred Stranger,” we will see how ancient Mediterranean culture in general – where Christianity came into being – honored the wandering stranger as one specially blessed by the Divine. And in “The Protestant Ethic” chapter we will consider how the place of the Divine, even geographically – cathedrals replaced by commercial buildings – has been usurped by money, and – above all – work for money. Working for money has become the primary cultural value in dominant Western culture. That is a world in which the sacred stranger cannot exist.

Returning to the Story

Unfortunately, at this church I had loved, attended regularly, and contributed to financially for many years, it was responses (e) and (f) with which I met on that Sunday in March 2004. It was at that church that I experienced a tremendous disillusionment, a tremendous sense of abandonment and betrayal, that is still difficult to write about and take in.

Again, if you are not a churchgoer, substitute “friend/family/significant other” for “minister” and imagine instead your family, your friends, whoever you rely on most, abandoning and betraying you. I am trying to write about it without resentment, with forgiveness, as part of my own healing process, understanding that ministers, just like the rest of us, are fallible created beings. But it is difficult. Even years later, this, for me, remains a heart-rending story.

On that morning, it felt like I was passed from one minister to another like a piece of smelly, unwanted dirty laundry. Minister #1 said, “You can't stay with me! I don't even live in the city” and told me to go talk to the next minister.

When I told minister #2 that I had spent the night on the church steps, what I saw in her eyes was not compassion or caring. What I saw in her eyes was sheer horror. Not horror for my plight, but horror that this exceedingly liberal church, which was trying so hard to be middle-class, would be shunned by its neighbors if anyone had seen me. This minister told me that the church could give me motel money for one night. That would tide me over until I stayed for another two days with spiritual friends. I was told to get out a phone book and find a low-cost motel.

There was absolutely no compassion in this response. No one sat with me, encouraged me, comforted me, or helped me. No, I had to “work” for my one night of motel money. I sat alone with the phone book while the early morning activity of the church swirled around me. I was totally ignored. By losing my home, by becoming poor, I had become a nonperson in the eyes of the leadership of this church, and their followers knew it and ignored me too. Years later, attending some divinity school classes, I heard the

phrase “pledging unit” and – at last - understood. I had ceased to be a pledging unit at this church. I had ceased to have money to contribute to this church. As a result, I no longer counted, in any sense of the word.

Everyone, and I am no exception, likes cause and effect explanations - even if they are wrong. And so, once again I was encountering the attitude I had encountered in applying for food stamps: the subtext of “you must have fallen into this plight *because* you're a lazy good-for-nothing without a work ethic, and we're going to teach you the *work ethic*. That's the problem! That's the solution! You need a good work ethic. Never mind that you just lost your home of 13 years! You are going to have to WORK to find this motel! We've not going to waste time consoling you! Get out those Yellow Pages and start calling!”

Were these really the followers of Jesus? Who touched the untouchables and cured the hopeless? Who Himself was a homeless itinerant preacher, supported (Luke says) by his wealthy female followers? Hard to believe. But my mind was in a whirl. It wasn't until months and even years later that I was able to begin to put words to the feelings.

Later, when I went up to minister #2 to say that I had enjoyed her sermon - a beautiful sermon about helping the disadvantaged and social justice - and to ask if I could come to discuss the spiritual meaning of what was happening to me, she told me that she would be too busy this week and to find someone else. Whatever her motivations, what I experienced from her in that moment was not the love of Christ, but a cruel sense of rejection. The abstract poor whom the church helps, and feels collectively good to have helped – as long as “they” are at a safe distance – sound louder than the actual poor person right there.

After the service, I tried to approach minister #3, who had prayed with me and met with me many times over the preceding years - those years when I was contributing thousands of dollars to the church. Suddenly she was also too busy. I asked her to pray with me. She told me that she was too busy to sit down and pray with me - she was, she said, involved in fund-raising for the poor. But she could *stand* and pray with me for a few seconds. How ironic. Even in my hopeless, scared, in-shock state this felt wrong. I said so. She suggested that I go speak

to minister #4.

It's hard to describe what I felt in my heart at that moment. I was in such a fog of fear and fatigue, from the many days and weeks and months of uncertainty, that the abandonment and betrayal that I came to feel later was just a distant echo. When I went to talk to minister #4, whom I had seen many times at services, and asked for spiritual guidance, he said, “Have you thought of therapy?”

At this point, despite everything, I just laughed. Even through my utter exhaustion I was able to remind him that I had had many years of therapy, had an M.A. in psychology and some clinical experience, and was, please God, planning to be a therapist myself.

In this terrible extremity, I wanted the spiritual guidance that I thought – I thought - the leaders of my church could provide. It was bitter to realize that they could not provide it, that this church that I had loved, that preached social justice and helping the disadvantaged (generally at a distance, with money, abstractly) turned away from someone in their midst, from the real individual who needed help, on that day, in that moment.

Of such people Jesus says, quoting the prophet Isaiah:

“These people worship me with their lips – but their hearts are far from me.

“Their hearts are far from me!”

And, again, it wasn't until years later, when I attempted to discern if I had a call to ordained Protestant ministry and saw firsthand how prospective ministers are taught, not to be sensitive and caring, but to be a combination of motivational speakers and corporate CEOs of Church, Inc., that I understood why the *best* reaction I received was one of perplexity. Mostly it was “Get him out of here! Get him out of our church!”

Much later I also realized that, like the thousands of homeless people whom those who have homes pass by, I too had become invisible, a pariah. As best I could understand it, this is what was happening on a thinking and feeling level.

When I was a relatively prosperous middle-class person who contributed regularly to the church, I was visible. But - in addition to my sudden poverty - my sudden losing of the status of “pledging unit” - having a well-educated middle-class person become homeless did not fit their paradigm of who the homeless are. It terrified them. Because suddenly it was no longer “us the affluent helpers” and “them the poor sick mentally ill addicted homeless.” Suddenly “one of us” had become “one of them.”

They thought that this reality couldn't happen to a middle-class person. And then suddenly there I was, in their midst. And suddenly all the denial, all the distance which they, we, place between ourselves and those people in the culture who have fallen below the radar, whom we no longer wish to acknowledge, who become invisible carriers of the cultural shadow - suddenly all that distance was gone. And I think they reacted so strongly and with such fear because they realized that indeed it could happen to them, too.

And they were terrified.

And I think my presence there was so terrifying to them because ... they were right. It happened to me. It could happen to them. It could happen to you.

Chapter 2 - Cultural and Archetypal Origins of Homelessness

The Lost Decade

What happened? How could this happen to me? Could this truly happen to you? Or perhaps it has already happened to you. Though this chapter contains a lot of dark and difficult things, they are necessary to slog through in order to understand the origins of homelessness. The story does not stop there. Difficult as it may seem, these energies are capable of transformation, both individually and culturally. But I will say in advance that

this is a difficult chapter. Of all the chapters in this book, it has been, for me, the most difficult to write.

For me the question became: How did a Harvard graduate – culturally defined and presupposed as destined for success - reasonably talented and focused and hard-working (more on the importance of that last later in this chapter), trying his best, fall short, fall through the cracks, become homeless? True, it was only for a short time in 2004, and for an even shorter time in 2010 (for this see Chapter 8).

But the threat and possibility of homelessness always hovered in the background. There was no stable housing – not truly stable, of the sort that the World War II generation took for granted. There was no firm land in the housing arena. I wanted to buy my own home and tried repeatedly to save up a down payment for it. I was thwarted by a housing system which demanded exorbitant down payments and by an economic system in which companies built their profits on the backs of “contractors” who had no desire to be entrepreneurs but who had no choice but to accept no-benefit, no-unemployment “contracts” just to survive. Over a thirty-year period I estimate that I have paid something like a quarter of a million dollars for rent. And that pattern is still continuing, for me and for countless millions of others.

Truly stable housing in this culture – owning one’s own home - has become the prerogative of an ever-shrinking minority of wealthy people, along with their children, relatives, and significant others. If you are currently part of this minority, count your blessings. But also understand that this kind of wealth is exclusionary, transitory, and – most of all – built on sand. And, for the rest of us – those of us who have tried our best to fulfill the American dream and have ended up impoverished and often homeless - there is a huge sense of betrayal.

Economists are now referring to the decade from 2000 to 2010 as “the lost decade”. During this period – for the first time since World War II – job creation stalled out. The double-digit job creation level that had prevailed since 1945 ground to a halt. Millions, if not tens of millions, of people found their living standard drastically reduced or descended into poverty – or worse.

I was one of these people, and I can only tell my own story. But it’s important to be aware of all the others who

have experienced what I am describing, or worse – much worse. I hold them in my prayers. And it is important also to be aware of the cultural and archetypal dynamics that are the basis of the cultural creation of a homeless population – ignored, despised, cast out. For many, the sentence to homelessness is a sentence of death.

Perhaps not right away. But the effects of stress and lack of health insurance – let us again remember that the American Medical Association managed to convince the nation in the 1930s that national health insurance would be “socialized medicine”, that worst of all monsters, and managed to use the specter of this terrible monster to condemn untold millions over the years to great suffering and premature death – can kill just as surely as any other fatal disease.

How did this happen? There are two main threads contributing to the meltdown of the culture of the New Deal and the Great Society, where prosperity and stable housing were to be shared by all, to an ever harsher, more exclusionary, more miserly culture of gain, personal advantage, selfishness, and increasing marginalization and economic deprivation for those who – for whatever the reason – just can’t succeed in this harsh new reality.

One strand was discerned over a century ago by social and economic philosopher Max Weber. He saw a disturbing cultural pattern that greatly helps to explain this dynamic. The other strand is based on a Jungian understanding of the psychocultural dynamic of why cultures *need* to choose populations to marginalize and exclude, whether the criteria of exclusion be related to racial, ethnic, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or any other criteria – including financial criteria.

Max Weber: “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”

In 1905, Max Weber published a book entitled *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.^{[\[4\]](#)} Over a century later, his book has gone through many reprints and is still considered a groundbreaking work of social and economic philosophy. In brief, Weber traces the rise of entrepreneurial capitalism in the West to the fragmenting of the Christian church with the advent of Protestantism in the sixteenth century. Weber notes that, pre-Protestantism, there was no doubt about who would be saved and who would not be saved. The Catholic

Church – which before Martin Luther was the only church in the West – decreed these matters. There was clear guidance. After the Reformation fragmented the Western church into numerous competing parts (and competition, whether theological or economic, is also a high value in this paradigm), there was, at first, no clear sense of to whom salvation would come. Indeed, some Protestant sects, like the Calvinists, held that salvation was predestined.

How, then, could a person know what his or her fate would be? The Calvinists especially, who – in the form of the Puritans – left a deep imprint on American culture in particular, had a simple, if ghastly, solution. Money replaced the imprimatur of the Catholic church as a clear indication of whether someone would be saved – or not. If a person was financially wealthy, they were saved. If a person was financially poor, they were not saved. Hard work was paradoxically part of this paradigm, even though the saved/not-saved dynamic was held to be an aspect of predestination. By hard work, earning money, and investing that money in worldly businesses, the – presumably – saved showed themselves worthy of salvation.

By the same token, money contributed to charities drastically declined. The poor were not to sit about in idleness. They were to WORK, no matter what that work was. Money and work became the primary cultural values. And that has continued to this day, dividing the rich from the poor, and the “worthy poor” (impoverished through some natural disaster) from the “unworthy poor” (impoverished through some financial disaster). This deep division and underlying scorn for poverty and the poor makes it almost impossible to return to the generosity of a generation ago. Modern American culture, which sees itself as advanced, sophisticated, and secular, has, ironically and increasingly, become Calvinist in its perspective, outlook, and actions.

Hurricanes and Tsunamis

In 2004, a tsunami struck the islands of Indonesia. Terrible devastation was wrought. During that time, employees of public transit systems in many areas could be seen at bus stops and transit stations, collecting money to help the thousands of unfortunates who had been displaced and made homeless by the terrible storms.

In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast of the United States. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps

millions, of people were left homeless in the wake of this terrible disaster. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) planned to build tent cities and to tow floating barges, used to house its own employees, into the area, to provide housing for those whose homes had been destroyed.

Many churches in affluent areas have poor churches - almost always outside of the U.S., in geographically distant parts of the world - that they sponsor. Every year, churchgoers travel to these very poor areas to help in building housing and contributing to the sponsored area's welfare, free of charge.

While the public transit employees were collecting funds to help in a tragedy thousands of miles away, homeless people were hungry and in some cases literally dying on the streets of their cities, right outside of those transit stations. While FEMA created instant housing for hundreds of thousands of people left homeless by a physical storm, an act of nature, millions of people across the United States, temporarily or chronically homeless because of a sudden financial disaster, job loss, physical or mental illness, or other factors beyond their control, could not rely on such generous assistance. While churchgoers traveled thousands of miles to temporarily help out poor communities, there were homeless people in great need close by, sometimes literally at the doorstep of the church - or within it.

Short-term help for “the worthy poor”

Two issues arise here: America's cultural propensity towards mobilizing in the wake of a disaster, rather than preparing for or preventing it; and the Protestant ethic concept of the “worthy poor” versus the “unworthy poor.”

America's cultural prejudice against long-term, undramatic planning and prevention versus short-term, dramatic, heroic rescues, is well-known. A company in America that plans a few months ahead is considered to be planning for the long term. By contrast, in Japan, businesses plan scenarios for at least five or ten years out. In America, health insurance companies routinely pay claims of hundreds or thousands of dollars for cases of flu that had complications or turned into pneumonia, rather than pay \$25 for the individual to get a flu shot to prevent getting the disease in the first place.

If it is a sudden, dramatic rescue, for a *temporary* situation – especially a dramatic one - Americans can be counted on to respond in droves. If it is a quiet, long-term, boring, difficult, demanding task to partially alleviate a difficult to solve, chronic situation, the response will be minimal or nonexistent.

America is a young country, and it still identifies with the “can-do” quick-fix attitude, with the dramatic and the heroic. The desire for a quick fix, and lack of understanding for a “long fix”, is especially prominent. Slow, long-term work is nearly incomprehensible within mainstream American culture, as is the phenomenon of slow, steady practice, with small, sometimes imperceptible, shifts and changes over many years.

The “unworthy poor”

But there is another factor as well. People who are made homeless by natural disasters such as the Indonesian tsunami or Hurricane Katrina, or by an overwhelming culture of poverty, such as poor churches abroad, are held to be morally blameless for their poverty and their lack of financial resources. The subtext is that - in the case of the natural disasters - they were once affluent, and it isn't their fault - it could happen to anyone. In the case of cultural poverty, it is perhaps a case of numbers. Since nearly everyone in the culture is poor, it is not seen as an individual sin (and, no matter how secular the overt culture is, we are here talking about a sense of “sin”). They were never affluent. Here again the individual is held to be blameless. These are the worthy poor.

But for the millions of homeless in America, for whom there are no money collectors in public transit stations and no FEMA employees rushing to set up tent cities, there is a sense in the dominant culture that it is somehow their fault, that they did something wrong – in fact, something morally wrong - and therefore are not deserving of freely given help. In short, to use a religious term not much favored these days – but at the absolute basis of this mentality – *these* poor people, *these* homeless people, are sinners. And sinners don't deserve freely given help. Sinners deserve punishment.

So they are punished. If they are offered food stamps, they need to do menial labor at

recycling centers. If they are offered “General Assistance” (formerly known as Welfare), they need to work at the equivalent of wages far below the minimum wage at whatever job the bureaucracy deems proper for them. In fact, in many states, welfare is now a loan, and not a grant. The subtext is that *these* poor people have sinned and that their poverty and/or homelessness is somehow a punishment for their sins, that the culture is - grudgingly - willing to perhaps, for a time, alleviate the worst of their suffering, but not, with generosity and love and even forgiveness, to solve the underlying problems that led to such devastating financial and housing hurricanes and tsunamis. This is a return to not only “the Protestant ethic”, but the Calvinist/Puritan/work and money glorifying ethic with a vengeance.

According to this false, condemnatory, and guilt-inducing paradigm, these are the poor who have sinned. And though, again, we live in a pronouncedly, self-identified secular culture, there is as much as sense of sin to be expiated that surrounds the homeless as in the most fanatically rigid religious culture with its untouchables. And, of course, as will be explored in more detail later on in this chapter, projecting the cultural shadow of guilt onto the homeless, so that there are “guilty homeless” people and “blameless affluent” people, also serves a major – if horrendous – cultural purpose.

An incident at a divinity school cafeteria – an incident that has seemed more and more bone-chilling to me as time has gone on – also may illustrate this point. Ironically, this was at a divinity school that was (and is) very proud of its reputation for radical action and social justice. A homeless man wandered in. There was a table of men and women in expensive suits – no doubt “suits” meeting to plan the next fund-raising venture for the school. None of them looked at the homeless man. None of them reached into his or her pocket to offer the homeless man \$6 for the all-you-can-eat lunch available at this cafeteria. No doubt for many if not all of them \$6 was pocket change. Living at the poverty level, it was not pocket change for me. I could not spare - or thought I could not spare - the \$6 to feed him. And I lacked the courage to confront the “suits” at their table. After a few minutes the homeless man wandered out again. Neither the “suits” nor I fulfilled Jesus’s statement in Matthew 25: “I was hungry and you gave me food.” We let Jesus, in this form, pass us by. We did not help him. I have no idea what – or if – he ate that day. Or what ever became of him. In the midst of this most radical, most social-justice-oriented, most visibly liberal and indeed radical divinity school, this man was invisible.

Another Way

There is One who touched the untouchables of His time, and led them out of invisibility. In the story reported in the Gospels of Mark and of Matthew, a “leper” - one who had a skin disease that was believed by the Jewish religion of that time to signify total religious impurity, and who therefore was, literally, an untouchable - came and knelt before Jesus and said, “Master, if you wish, you can make me clean.”

The Gospels then report that Jesus, full of compassion, touched the man and said: “I do want that - be clean!”

This was unheard of: for a spiritual master in that tradition to touch, to physically touch, an untouchable, and - even more so, perhaps - to *care* about his welfare and well-being. Yet Jesus, courageously, went outside of His own cultural norms to heal.

And to care.

Every culture has its untouchables, its liminal people, its invisible population. For modern American culture, it is the homeless. “They” are seen a black pit of hopelessness into which no one in the dominant culture should ever fall. And if someone does, and goes from being one of the affluent “us” to one of the homeless “them,” it is *their* *fault*.

Weber discerned the socioeconomic roots that emerged from the Protestant, and particularly, the Calvinist philosophy. But there is more to this horrendous situation than socioeconomic theory and theology. There is more than simply defining a cultural fringe of rejected “sinners”. There is an archetypal level that is rarely, if ever, explored.

Jung and Jungian Psychology

Thousands, if not tens of thousands, of books have been written over the years about Jung and Jungian psychology. This brief introduction cannot hope to summarize even a few of them. However, since the rest of this

chapter, and indeed the rest of this book, will be based on Jungian psychology, here are some of the main points.

Note: For the interested reader who would like to learn more about Jungian psychology, an excellent way to begin is with Jung's own writings. *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*, published in 1916, is Jung's own introduction to his form of psychology. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, published at the other end of Jung's life in the late 1950s, is Jung's psychological autobiography, written with the help of Aniele Jaffé, one of Jung's students.

Jung

Carl Gustav Jung (most often referred to as C.G. Jung) was born in Switzerland in 1875, the son of a Protestant minister who, Jung says, despite his profession, lacked faith. From a very early age onward, Jung was seeking for the spiritual and had powerful inner experiences that he sought to understand. But – from his father who lacked faith, and perhaps from the – as we have seen – money-oriented, unspiritual religion itself - he had no framework or context for his experiences. Jung originally wanted to be an archaeologist but – because of his limited financial circumstances – knew he had to choose an academic course of study that led to a remunerative profession. He chose medicine, and later specialized in psychiatry. The experiences of a young somnambulist relative became the subject of his dissertation. A few years later, working at the Burghölzli Mental Hospital, Jung encountered individuals who seemed to have bizarre imagery which the rest of the medical establishment there denigrated or ignored. Jung, however, due to his interest in ancient religion and mythology, was able to contextualize both their experiences and his own.

In the meantime, Jung had become interested in Freudian psychology, which was still somewhat new and controversial at the time (around 1910). In fact, Jung became so knowledgeable that Freud considered Jung his, Freud's, successor, the “crown prince” of Freudian psychology. In 1911, Freud and Jung journeyed by sea to Clark University in the U.S., where they had been jointly invited, to give a series of lectures. On this sea journey, they agreed to analyze one another's dreams.

Or so Jung thought. In reality, Freud could not bear to reveal himself to such a great degree to an “inferior”.

Freud was perfectly willing to listen to – and dissect – Jung’s dreams, but shared none of his own.

At this time, Jung had a dream where he was descending further and further into the past: first into historical times, then into prehistoric times. Jung understood this as clearly a call to learn about and understand what he came to call the archetypal layers of the psyche. Freud understood it only as a form of personal pathology, in an approach that Jung came to call “nothing but” – nothing but a personalistic, reductionistic, pathologizing view of the human psyche.

In *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*, where Jung explores a given psychological problem from the points of view of Freudian, Adlerian, and his own Jungian psychology, Jung notes that Freud’s psychology is always looking backward only to the personal (and pathological) past. To this Jung replies: “Life does not only have a yesterday. Life also has a tomorrow.” This future-looking, teleological, hopeful point of view is one of the main things that distinguishes Jungian psychology from other forms.

Archetypes

A major Jungian concept which we will encounter repeatedly is that of the archetype. The ancient Greek word “archetypos” means something like “original form” or “first impression” (as a coin stamp creates an impression of a coin). The first person to use this word was Plato, in the fifth century B.C. Plato had a profound influence both on the course of philosophy and – through the later Neoplatonists such as Philo of Alexandria – on early Christian theology. The concept of pre-existing forms thus passed from Plato to the Neoplatonists and into early Christianity.

Jung uses “archetype” to mean an energy configuration, most often appearing in images to individuals in dreams or inner visions, as well as culturally in characters and situations in mythology and fairytales. Examples are the figures of archetypal father and archetypal mother, as well as such archetypal situations as the hero’s journey, exhaustively considered by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. Jung believed that, just as

human physical anatomy is universal, so too is the psychic human anatomy of the archetypes. This is an unpopular viewpoint in the current academic climate, where deconstructionism, destructive irony, and “nothing but” are so predominant. However, it is a profoundly hope-giving psychology, and for many resonates deeply with the truth felt in the depths of the soul.

On the journey to Clark University, Jung realized that he was at a watershed, a fork in the road. He could accept the dogma of Freudian psychology and become a servant of the “nothing but”. Then he would have been the “crown prince”, showered with honors, holding a high position in an already-established (if still controversial) psychology. In doing so he would abandon himself, his own true point of view, his own true being. Or he could affirm his point of view, go his own way, and thereby destroy for many years, perhaps forever, any chance of great worldly success.

In accordance with Jesus’s teaching: “What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” Jung chose to remain true to himself and to renounce the “crown prince” position which Freud was offering. In many if not most traditional psychoanalytic circles Jung is still considered at best a crackpot and at worst a madman. But for those of us who follow Jung, he is a pioneer, a guide, who found a way back to an understanding of the treasures of the unconscious and the deep healing powers of the psyche that Western culture had slowly, painstakingly gained in antiquity, and then – right around the time of the rise of “the Protestant ethic”, interestingly enough – thrown into the trash heap.

In 1912, shortly after the journey to Clark University, Jung published his *Symbole und Wandlungen der Libido* (Symbols and Changes of Psychic Energy), translated a few years later into English as *Symbols of Transformation*. It is a study of the transformative dreams and inner visions of a single individual, along with very deep and extensive amplifications. (To “amplify” a dream means to place it in its archetypal context, usually by citing similar images, structures, and concepts in mythology, ancient religions, fairytales, alchemical works, and sometimes other sources of archetypal material, such as modern art and literature).

Jung himself had many archetypal dreams, detailed in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. But the influx of

archetypal contents during World War I proved too much for dreamwork alone. Archetypal energies carry such a powerful energy charge that the individual can become overwhelmed by them, and – if he or she identifies with them and cannot differentiate the ego standpoint from the archetype – can become submerged in a psychotic episode. This nearly happened to Jung. For sheer survival, Jung found himself developing a meditative technique for differentiating the ego from the unconscious that he eventually named “active imagination”.

Note for the interested reader: The first discussion of active imagination in Jung’s own writings is in his 1916 essay entitled “The Transcendent Function”, found in Volume 9b of Jung’s *Collected Works*. Subsequent considerations of active imagination may be found in Jung’s commentary on the Chinese alchemical work (translated by Richard Wilhelm), “The Secret of the Golden Flower”, found in *Alchemical Studies*; very briefly in *Psychology and Alchemy*; and in Jung’s final work on alchemy, written in the 1950s, *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (The Mystery of Union). Written in mid-twentieth century, Barbara Hannah’s book on active imagination is still an excellent introduction, as is the more recent *Inner Work* by Robert Johnson.

Jung continued his work on the meaning of the archetypal contents of the unconscious, developing the differentiation between “collective unconscious” (which contains the archetypal energies) and the “personal unconscious”. While he continued his interest in mythology, Jung – synchronistically led to Richard Wilhelm’s translation of the Chinese alchemical work, “The Secret of the Golden Flower”, in 1928 – came to realize that alchemical works – rejected (again interestingly) since about the time of the Reformation as superstitious nonsense – if understood symbolically (as the alchemists themselves insisted their works should be understood) contained a vast conceptual framework and vocabulary for understanding unconscious processes. Jung devoted most of his research and writing for the following thirty years to Latin alchemical works, most of which existed (and still exist) in manuscript form only and which had been overwhelmingly lost to the Western intellectual tradition until Jung wrote about them and made them accessible once again.

In this book, we will be mostly considering the archetypes of the Good Mother and the Terrible Mother, shadow energy – including, very importantly, cultural shadow energy - , the phenomenon of projection and projective identification as understood from a Jungian point of view, and the absolute importance of disidentifying from the

energies of projection and of gaining a separate perspective. These are complex concepts, and there are many ways of working with them and understanding them. What is presented here is one possible path.

The Good Mother and the Terrible Mother

In his groundbreaking book, *The Great Mother*, Erich Neumann, an early student of Jung, discusses various aspects of the Mother archetype. ^[5] As with many archetypes, this archetype has two poles. There is the good, nourishing Mother, who brings an abundant supply of physical needs to Her children. She is represented by such figures as Isis, Demeter, and, in the Christian tradition, Mother Mary and the Wisdom tradition of Sophia/Sapientia.

But there is also the Terrible Mother, whom Neumann sees in a variety of ways. The most relevant to our study of homelessness is the aspect of the Terrible Mother that Neumann calls “the negative elementary character.” This negative feminine energy is the exact opposite of the kind, loving, nourishing Good Mother. She is an energy force that creates deprivation: starvation, cold, homelessness, and ultimately physical death.

The Cultural Shadow

Is there any way to counteract her effects? The first and most important way is to realize that she exists and that she is a powerful, often unseen, force in modern American culture. But since the reality of the culture and the culture's image of itself diverge so radically, this is often not as simple as it appears. For example, the culture has a view of itself as helpful, self-reliant, and merciful. Meanwhile literally millions of homeless people nationwide are cast out into the street to die. No other culture in the Western world is this callous.

It is a truism in Jungian psychology that all aspects of the individual personality that are unacceptable to the ego fall into the shadow. The shadow begins as a sort of dumping ground for anything that the conscious personality cannot accept. But, as the ancient alchemists said of the lapis, the stone of transformation, “in stercore invenitur” - “it is found in the trash heap.” Only by facing one's own shadow qualities

can transformation begin. This is true on a cultural level as well.

For a “can-do” culture in which everyone who works hard succeeds – the cultural self-image created by the Protestant ethic - the shadow image is obviously the hard worker who does not succeed, who falls into poverty and homelessness. This creates cognitive dissonance for the culture – i.e., by the cultural norms a poor, homeless, hard-working person is an impossibility, a contradiction in terms.

So there is cultural denial. Either the person is not *really* poor and homeless. Or else the person is not *really* a hard worker – since, by definition, hard workers succeed; they are (or eventually become) affluent and successful. The reality of the hard worker who becomes poor and homeless – since it does not fit the cultural paradigm - falls into the shadow. The cultural denial – along with the concomitant denigration, blame, and guilt – is projected onto homeless people in the form of: “It’s *their* fault. If they’d only work hard enough and follow the American work ethic (i.e. the Protestant ethic) enough, they’d succeed.”

So – for instance – food stamp programs insist that recipients show up at least a half hour before their appointments ... because obviously “they” are poor and in need of food stamps because they don’t follow the being-on-time aspect of the Protestant work ethic, and a “benevolent” bureaucracy committed to social engineering has decided that “they” must be taught this being- on-time piece in no uncertain terms. Then, of course, “they” will succeed and become affluent – since a hard worker who is not affluent is, again obviously within this paradigm, a contradiction in terms.

This fulfills another Jungian-psychological tenet: that whatever is not consciously understood and accepted, whatever falls into the shadow and remains unconscious there, is projected. Instead of saying: “This is a flawed culture which has one set of stated ideals and a totally different set of actual ideals – the American dream doesn’t work any more”, the culture says: “The American dream still works. The culture isn’t flawed. THOSE PEOPLE are flawed.” This is projection. To paraphrase Jesus’s saying: Don’t worry about the tiny little speck of sawdust in your fellow person’s eye. Worry about the huge beam of wood in *your* eye, that is blocking you from seeing clearly.

Similarly, the reality of “the American dream” – that hard work and expertise would bring success - wasn’t at all my experience, or that of hundreds of thousands of other laid-off high tech workers in Silicon Valley. In fact, the reverse was true. My experience was that the more competent I became, the harder I worked, the better qualified I was, the more likely it was that I would be laid off ... because I was more expensive. The primary corporate value was no longer (if it had ever been) a work ethic based on experience and excellence. It was the bottom line. The plug-in components (people) who were most expensive were disposed of (laid off), no matter what their qualifications. The plug-in components (people) who were cheapest were kept. All, of course, except the CEO. He or she was never laid off. In fact, he or she most often got a raise or a “golden parachute” during these terrible times.

On an individual level, in order for shadow qualities to become conscious and transform, it is necessary to withdraw projections and acknowledge them, however painfully, as one's own. Many spiritual practices have their own form of coming to consciousness of shadow issues. For example, various Christian denominations retain the ancient practice of confession, whether before a priest, or directly before God, or both. Recovery programs have a form of this in the making of “a searching and fearless moral inventory” and “admitting to God, to oneself, and to another human being the exact nature of [one’s] wrongs.” On a cultural level, it's necessary to acknowledge that these shadow qualities exist, understand the cultural necessity that creates them, and to try to work on them to the best of one's ability. Denying their existence is the surest way for the culture to remain untransformed and for the issues created by lack of consciousness to continue.

For cultures, too, have shadows. On the individual level, shadow qualities are projected onto other individuals. On the cultural level, they are projected onto groups in the culture whom the culture then scapegoats. For the scapegoats themselves – the poor and homeless population, in the context of this book - this problem is made worse by a phenomenon known as projective identification.

Projective Identification

All practicing therapists, and many teachers and clergy people, know the power of projective identification. This

namely the Old Testament. There the High Priest literally puts his hands on the goat, transfers the sins of the entire people on an energy level to the goat (a form of projection), and then sends the goat out into the wilderness to die a horrible death by thirst, starvation, falling off a cliff. The goat, obviously, has no choice in the matter. (At the end of this chapter is a poem I wrote where the goat – the scapegoat - does choose differently.)

In family therapy, there is the well-known concept of the “identified patient.” The family dynamic needs the “identified patient” in order to stay in a state of denial regarding its own dysfunctionality. The energy of the social pressure is often so great that the “identified patient” never can emerge from that role.

Similarly, modern American culture needs to maintain a homeless population in order to have a psychocultural “identified patient” that allows it to remain in denial about its own lack of compassion, in denial about the many holes in the theory and reality of the “American dream.” As is the case with the dysfunctional family, cultural “quick fixes” based on financial assistance and “job training,” while perhaps alleviating the immediate problem, cannot shift the underlying dysfunctional cultural dynamic.

Liminality and the Invisible People

Many anthropologists and mythologists believe that there is a threefold paradigm of the initiatory process: separation, liminality, and incorporation. In separation, the individual separates from his own culture, whether physically or spiritually. In liminality, the individual is in an “in-between” state for a time, ranging from days to months to years, while he or she transforms, or is transformed, by letting go of an old identity and taking on a new. Mythically this is often portrayed by physical journeying, such as the journeying of Odysseus or Aeneas in the ancient world, and, more recently, by the journeying of Luke Skywalker in the “Star Wars” movies. In incorporation, the individual, having experienced a profound transformation, returns to either his or her previous culture, or goes to and perhaps founds a new culture, in his or her new form. Sometimes the journey is both a physical and spiritual journey, as in Native American vision quests, where the individual “cries for a vision.”

When there is a cultural vessel for such a transformation, the individual is led through these initiatory stages in set, culturally determined ways, which can take many forms. Other examples in Western culture are Christian adult baptism and/or confirmation, and Jungian analysis. The middle stage, liminality, is perhaps the most difficult. It is a stage of not-knowing, of confusion, often of chaos. It is meant to be passed through, not dwelt in. But unfortunately part of the cultural dynamic of shadow projection is to trap marginalized populations in liminality from which they cannot emerge.

Unlike indigenous cultures, that both lead people into liminality and provide a way through to reincorporation, dominant American culture dumps homeless people into liminality to stay there as a life sentence, so that it will not have to deal with its own shadow energies. Instead of being honored vessels of a difficult but meaningful initiatory process, they become – or at least the culture tries to make them into – cultural trash cans.

An Example of Projective Identification

As Jung points out, that is one of the psychological functions of projection: to make sure that the person (or culture) doing the projecting never becomes conscious of the projected content. A somewhat exaggerated and simplified example of projective identification on the individual level would be the following:

- A narcissistic individual feels: “I am great, wealthy, powerful, immensely successful in my field.”
- Falling into the shadow would be any feelings of: “I am unsuccessful, poor, powerless, worthless, a failure.”
- The narcissistic individual sees a homeless person on the street from the window of his (expensive, high-status) car on the way to work and thinks: “I’m immensely successful and powerful and HE’s a total failure and totally powerless.”
- The homeless person picks up on this energy and the energy of the literally hundreds of people during that one day who aim similar energies of projection at him and thinks: “I’m a total failure and totally powerless.”

In all the discussions on “solving homelessness,” the need of modern American culture for a dumping ground for its shadow, which it finds, among other marginalized populations, in the homeless, is never addressed. If homeless people became visible, it would mean that this culture would have to confront its own shadow and engage in what Jung called an “Auseinandersetzung” – a coming to terms with, and an owning of, that difficult and painful shadow energy.

Projective Identification and Cultural Invisibility

In Chapter 1, I describe an incident that took place in a church which I had seen as a spiritual home. One aspect of that story was my invisibility. As I was passed from one minister to the next, I became a person who was invisible, who did not have a place in that context. For all practical purposes, I became a person who did not exist - for them. When I had been middle-class and was contributing a fair amount of money to the church, all seemed well. But when I lost nearly everything and was a homeless person, I was all but ignored. (And, parenthetically, when I was led to a new home and started having a more stable physical life and earning money again – even though at the poverty level - I became visible again. It was the *act* of earning money, rather than *being* a beloved child of God, that made me visible at that church – a church which I eventually left.)

On that Sunday morning, the energy of the church eddied and flowed around me. I stood in the main sanctuary with a minister who couldn't sit down and pray with me because she didn't have any time to pray - she had to go organize a fund-raising event to help poor people. People came and went, speaking to her about fund-raising for important causes. But no attention was paid to the actual person right there - me - who was desperately in need of help. The help did come, and it came from God. But it did not come through that church.

I was physically present. But I may as well have been invisible. I was not seen. As “My Story” describes, these seemingly well-meaning, compassionate church leaders suddenly became frightened and emotionally brutal. They wanted to send me away and, in the end, they did send me away: to a church where “they” (the homeless) were, at least theoretically, ministered to. I can only believe that my sudden and precipitous descent into liminality had echoes in them,

If the numbness/frozenness/"deer in the headlights" energy is added to this projective identification, the result is essentially a total sense of disempowerment. The numbness caused by the extreme physical and/or psychological wounding of the abuse is compounded by the cultural enforcement of a sense of utter powerlessness and lack of an ability to be effective in the outer human world on one's own behalf.

In abuse survivors, often the numbness is followed by, and sometimes accompanied by, sheer utter extreme exhaustion. The numbness can be a form of getting through the day, going on autopilot but not having any feelings about it, at least not consciously. The exhaustion is a step towards consciousness – feeling the utter depletion of energy that comes with being a survivor of extreme abuse.

Since we live in a culture that tells us to "suck it up" and keep going – and sometimes that is the appropriate and necessary survival response for a short time, but it is not ultimately healing – often these feelings are pushed out of consciousness and fall into the shadow, where they can exert very powerful unconscious energy effects. Esther Harding, an early student of Jung in the 1930s, notes that some people who have what nowadays would be called extremely low self-esteem, have a "bright shadow". The sense of self-worth and self-esteem is utterly rejected and the conscious ego personality is one of self-hatred and self-contempt.

This pattern can be exacerbated by retraumatization by means of a traumatic event similar in some way to the original trauma, what many survivors call "triggering". For me, the experience in August 2010 of being cast out into the street to die by someone whose superficial New Age philosophy would have just shrugged over such an event and called it karma, was a severe retraumatization. At first I experienced the "autopilot" form of numbness. I had to put my feelings on hold while I dealt with the – for me – overwhelming energies of the sheer practical aspects of moving twice in two months. Thinking about or trying to work with my feelings would have been counterproductive.

It was only after I was somewhat settled a few weeks later that the exhaustion set in. I could finally begin to believe that I would have a roof over my head on a steady basis for a while. So I could let myself begin to feel my feelings. At that point I spent days at home, much of the time in bed, unable to go out or do much of anything

except eat and sleep and try to recover by means of various body/mind/spirit practices a sense of center and, at least to some degree, a sense of healthy control and empowerment. Only very slowly have I been able to resume outer human world activities. I am, by the grace of God, able to feel energy returning, but it is a very slow process. I know that during these times of extreme fragility I tend to attract even more than usual scapegoat projections, because the “hook” (as Jung named it) for projections is bigger at such times. So I need to be extra careful to give back those energies to the energy abusers (whether or not they are conscious of what they are doing) and to pray for groundedness and centeredness even more than usual.

Coming out of numbness and disempowerment: Mark 9

The story in Mark 9 of how Jesus heals a boy of what the text calls possession by an unclean spirit may be understood on many levels, one of which is a symbolic portrayal of the consequences of extreme trauma and their healing. Let us listen to Mark tell this story (my translation of Saint Jerome’s Latin translation, ca. 400 A.D.):

And coming to His students they saw a large crowd around them and the scribes arguing with them. And immediately the whole people seeing Him were thunderstruck and they ran and greeted Him. And He asked them: “What are you arguing about amongst yourselves?” And one of the crowd answered Him: “Master, I have brought my son to you – he has a mute spirit. And whenever it takes hold of him, it strikes him down, and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes stiff (numb). And I asked your students to cast it out, and they couldn’t do it. And Jesus answered them and said: “O unbelieving generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I put up with you? Bring him to me.”

And they brought the boy to Him. And when He saw him, the spirit immediately threw the boy into chaos and confusion. And the boy collapsed on the ground and rolled around foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father: “How long has it been since this happened to him?” And the father said: “From infancy. And very often it throws him into fire and into water, in order to kill him; but if you can do anything, help us, have mercy on us!” And Jesus said to him: “If you can? All things are “can” to one

who believes.” (omnia possibilia credenti) And immediately the boy’s father cried out with tears: “I do believe! Help my unbelief!”

And when Jesus saw the crowd running [towards them], He rebuked the unclean spirit and said to it: “Mute and deaf spirit, I command you: Get out of him and never go into him any more!” And shouting and tearing the boy up a lot the unclean spirit went out; and the boy was like one who was dead, so that many said: “He’s dead!” But Jesus took hold of his hand and raised him up, and he stood up.

And after He had gone home, his students asked Him privately: “Why weren’t WE able to cast it out?” And He said to them: “This kind cannot go out except in prayer.”

The rationalistic liberal Protestant tradition understands “unclean spirits” as wholly inner experiences, some form of physical and/or psychological illnesses.

However, there is a negative side to spirituality and spiritual beings as well. In Ephesians 6, Saint Paul says: “For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, the powers, the rulers of this world of darkness, against the spiritual powers of evil in the heavenly realms.” There may be a physical and/or psychological component to this boy’s susceptibility to the evil spiritual energy – the unclean spirit – but since the possession began in infancy, however much this spirit may have twisted the unfortunate boy’s energy and ruined his life, it is clearly a possession from without. If we wish to add a component of rationalism, we can wonder if the boy and his father were a member of a marginalized population such as the Samaritans, and if the energy from without, which does not belong to the boy, is a form of projective identification. But the text says nothing about this.

Whatever horrible energy has been causing it, the boy is experiencing symptoms that are very similar on an energy level to the consequences of severe trauma. He is totally disempowered. He collapses, rolls on the ground, loses bodily control, and “stiffens up” (arescit). This stiffening up is very similar energetically to the “freeze” or numbness mode of the aftermath of trauma.

Many trauma survivors are trapped by the invisibility of their disability. On good days they – we – look like anybody else. But on their not so good days they – we – lay in bed shaking, unable to be active in outer reality. The dominant culture, of course, wants to medicate these symptoms out of existence so that the trauma survivor can “function effectively” in the work/money world – as we saw earlier in this chapter, the post-Reformation substitute for the Divine. And as we will see in Chapter 8, blasting symptoms out of existence with psychotropic medication serves the bottom line. It does not serve consciousness or healing. This is not the way of Jungian healing, nor is it the healing path that Jesus shows us in this story.

For what Jesus requires of the father of the boy is faith. The boy is either too young or too far gone in the state of possession to have faith himself at this point. And when called to the way of faith the father cries out, “I do believe! Help my unbelief!” The father knows both that he has that smidgen of faith, the mustard seed, that even makes prayer possible, *and* that he lacks the deeper faith that would open him, and his son, to healing. And so he prays: “Help my unbelief!”

Jesus doesn’t answer the father. Rather, He speaks to the unclean spirit and commands it to GET OUT! To get out of the boy’s body, mind, and spirit which it has possessed for so long. And it does get out, but not without causing severe damage at the end – so severe that the onlookers say of the boy: “He’s dead.”

The moment after a great healing has occurred is a time for both great thanksgiving and great caution. In terms of seeing this story symbolically as the healing of a trauma survivor, there are certainly many people – the conduits of the scapegoat archetypal projection – who are willing to stand around and say to the abuse survivor – as the onlookers in an earlier story in Mark say: “Why are you bothering the Master? The girl is dead!” Give up, it’s no use, he’ll never get any better, he’s dead.

“But Jesus, taking hold of his hand, raised up the boy, and he stood up.” The culture gave up on this extreme abuse survivor – for it is extreme abuse that some of us have actually experienced, when someone repeatedly tries to kill you, physically, spiritually, and/or energywise – “and very often it throws him into fire and into water,

in order to kill him.” Jesus, however, knows that however tiny the hope, however tiny the belief, however huge the unbelief, this boy can be raised up and saved – saved physically, psychologically, and spiritually. But he cannot stand up alone. He needs help. So Jesus, totally ignoring the naysayers (as he also does in that other story) grips the boy’s hand and helps him to stand up. “And the boy stood up.”

Jesus never blames the people who come to Him for healing, of whatever age, of whatever problem or illness or psychological or spiritual wounding. He heals them. He doesn’t try to physically or chemically restrain them or get them to deny or to forget their suffering. He also doesn’t tell them that, too bad, their suffering is just their karma in this life. He heals them, and they stand up. Stand up as who they most truly are, stand up empowered in the outer human world, stand up to the abusers and go free.

Encountering and Overcoming the Terrible Mother: The Myth of Perseus

Jung called mythology “the textbook of the archetypes.” Often mythological stories and figures provide a way through archetypal dilemmas. On a deeper and more heart-connected level, as one of Jung’s early students in the 1930s, Marie-Louise von Franz, notes, simply telling these stories and attempting to connect to them and their themes as best we can is a healing experience. We do not need to understand every single detail to experience this kind of healing. Simply a willingness to listen and an openness to the mythic transformation is enough.

In the case of facing and overcoming the energy of the Terrible Mother, the ancient Greek myth of Perseus and Medusa is instructive. Perseus is far from a saint. He is, in fact, a rash, arrogant young man at the point at which we meet him in this story. But he nonetheless is able to muster up within himself the humility to listen to and follow the many divine helpers who come his way.

Perseus, the grandson of King Acrisius, grows up in what nowadays would be called a “blended family.”

Acrisius has received a prophecy that his grandson will kill him someday. So he abandons Perseus and Perseus's mother Danae in a wooden chest, thinking he is abandoning them to their deaths.

But the wooden chest washes up on the shore of an island, where it is found by the fisherman Dictys. Dictys takes them to his brother, the king of the island. As the years pass, the king becomes more and more enamored of Danae and Perseus grows increasingly upset. Finally, there is a rumor (not true) that the king wishes to marry Hippodameia ("Mistress of Horses") and not Danae. Perseus offers to bring a wedding gift. The king asks him what he'll bring. Perseus – clearly seeking to impress with a great deed - rashly offers to go get the head of Medusa.

Medusa was a terrible monster who lived in the farthest realms. She and her two sisters together were known as the Gorgons. Medusa in particular had a gaze that could turn people into stone. In term of the Jungian paradigm that we have been exploring, she could enslave people, disempower them, and keep them in a state of projective identification, far from their true being.

Fortunately, Perseus is given divine help, which he is able to accept. Athena, the goddess of wisdom and of warfare, gives him a burnished shield, bright as a mirror, in which to see Medusa, so that he doesn't get turned into stone. Hermes, the messenger of the gods, gives him a sickle to cut off the monster's head. The Nymphs give him a helmet of invisibility, winged sandals, and a leather bag to carry off the head of Medusa.

Thus equipped, Perseus flies into the far-distant land where the Gorgons dwell. He sees Medusa in the mirror-shield, cuts off her head with the sickle, puts it into the leather bag, and is saved from a confrontation with her equally monstrous sisters by his helmet of invisibility. His winged sandals enable him to fly away, to escape certain death. His mission accomplished, Perseus flies swiftly home and, having come to some wisdom himself on this mission, presents the head of Medusa not to his treacherous would-be stepfather but to Athena, who incorporates it into her armor as a protector of the sacred. [\[7\]](#)

Medusa Energy: The Paralyzing Aspect of the Terrible Mother

Medusa's gaze, as mentioned above, could turn people into stone. In energy terms, this means an absolute inability to be active on one's own behalf. As discussed above, this is a common and well-known aspect of post-

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), found almost universally among abuse survivors. It is also a common attribute among the homeless population, who - with reason - often believe that there is nothing they can do to make their situation better, that the culture has effectively condemned them to death.

This is an accurate perception of the massive projection which the culture has projected onto them. In the example of projective identification above, where the narcissistic businessman projects his shadow feelings of powerlessness on the homeless man, who identifies with them. This is Medusa energy – a sense of powerlessness that turns homeless people, and other scapegoated people, into stone, rendering them incapable of being empowered and of acting on their own behalf. And just as culturally competent therapists must take prejudice of various forms into account when working with clients, and recognize issues as systemic issues, so too those who work with homeless people and other scapegoated, marginalized populations, must understand the archetypal and systemic issues at work in their situations. To do otherwise is to risk their clients' sanity and indeed sometimes their very lives.

Both in the case of individual PTSD and cultural projection, the actions of Perseus provide many hints to a way through. First of all, and perhaps most importantly, Perseus is open to divine help, to help beyond the natural. Athena, the goddess of wisdom and of warfare, gives him a burnished mirror-like shield by which he can see Medusa without being frozen by her gaze.

It is impossible to confront Medusa energy –the Terrible Mother energy of homelessness, economic enslavements, paralysis of the will, staying in projective identification - directly. Perhaps another aspect of the shield is to deflect, to send back the energy of the paralyzing Medusa energy to Medusa herself, to freeze her in her tracks - frozen by her own paralyzing energy turned back upon her. As the Psalmist says of those who do evil (Psalm 37): “Their swords will enter into their own hearts, and their bows will be broken.”

The Medusa energy cannot be confronted directly, but it can be turned back upon itself. In this aikido or judo like move, the object or target of the projection refuses to take on the energy being projected onto him or her. The abuser, or the abusive culture, is forced take back and deal with its own shadow energy.

Similarly, in Mark 5, Jesus – as the text says literally – “throws out” the relatives of the young girl who are, again literally, ridiculing and making fun of Jesus. In such a negative paradigm (which Jesus also encountered at Nazareth) great deeds of healing are impossible. The negativity has to be cast out, neutralized, before healing can occur.

Martin Luther King and his followers used a very similar technique when they faced racial prejudice and hatred in the early and mid 1960s. They maintained a stance of spiritual calm and great dignity which forced both their attackers and ultimately the entire nation to see racial prejudice as a cruel, ugly, destructive energy. However difficult, that is the spiritual stance that is needed here.

From Hermes, the gods' messenger, Perseus receives a sickle with which to cut off Medusa's head. This symbolizes both decisiveness and separation. It is absolutely essential to separate from the viewpoint of the Terrible Mother energy. To use again the analogy of the fight for racial equality in the 1960s, the people involved in this fight and their allies refused to take on the viewpoint of African-Americans promulgated by racists. Their deep religious faith and their belief in their cause gave them a different self-image, a different sense of self. So too people who find themselves homeless need to affirm their inner dignity and worth as children of God and – using the “mirror” – deflect back onto their detractors and abusers the deadly destructive energy of contempt and hatred.

Sometimes spiritual practices refer to this as seeing oneself through God's eyes. To see oneself through the abusers' eyes is to place oneself under the power of the abusers' paradigm, to see oneself as a slave, a garbage can, a piece of trash, a plug-in component to be used up, burned out, destroyed, in order to feed another's proliferating greed. To see oneself through God's eyes is to place oneself in a universe of infinite possibility, created by a loving Creator.

Medusa paralyzes by pulling the scapegoated individual or group into her paradigm. It is ultimately a paradigm of paralysis and death. To escape from it, one must accept divine help and separate from this death-causing

paradigm. This is what Perseus does.

Perseus is also given a helmet of invisibility, winged sandals, and a leather bag in which to carry off the head of Medusa. The helmet of invisibility is the inverse of the mirror-shield. Just as Perseus must not confront Medusa directly, so too he needs to not be confronted by Medusa. This is a situation of healing, lifesaving invisibility, Perseus must be invisible to Medusa. He must be able to escape quickly the wrath of her sisters - for Medusa is not the only monster. And he must be able to store the energy safely and not continue to be affected by it - thus the leather bag.

On some level, Perseus can be seen as a cultural healer, bringing the monster's head back to be examined by the culture, understood, and - safely - reclaimed. In this instance, “safely” means giving Medusa's head into the keeping of the Divine, here represented by the goddess Athena. Athena incorporates Medusa's energy into her armor, to be used as protective energy for the sacred.

Disidentifying from the Scapegoat Archetype

The first step involved in disidentifying from projective identification is to realize that projection, and projective identification, is happening. The whole dangerous point of projective identification is that it is ego-syntonic – i.e., it feels like part of one's personality, part of “me”, even though it isn't. Realizing that there is an energy that feels like me but is not-me is absolutely essential. This requires identifying the energy – not identifying *with* the energy, but separating *from* the energy while understanding the nature of the energy.

For example, if the homeless – or other marginalized – person feels: “I'm a total failure, I'll never succeed” there is a good chance that this has a strong element of projective identification. The cultural shadow of a culture of success, effort, achievement, “work”, is financial failure. Identifying the failure feeling – and the severe depression which it may bring in its wake – as belonging to the cultural shadow is a huge step in disidentifying from it and from reclaiming one's own true identity. All the “work ethic” training (or propaganda) in the world can never substitute for this crucial step.

Then one must ground and center and confront the not-me energy as a spiritual warrior. In the New Testament, these deadly, life-destroying energies are called “unclean spirits” and are cast out by the power of Jesus. In alchemy, the lapis, the precious stone of transformation is referred to as “that from which nothing superfluous has been added, and from which everything extraneous has been taken away.”^[8] It is only by coming to a sense of one’s true self and standing on one’s true ground that one can successfully combat the energies of projective identification.

A Personal Afterword for Scapegoats

I wrote this poem on Christmas Eve 2008, at a time of great despair, knowing that I needed to disidentify from this powerful - and life-threatening - archetype.

The Song of the Scapegoat

On the Day of Atonement

The High Priest

Laid his hands on me and said

Here are all the sins of the people. I lay them on you.

I am sending you out into the desert to die

To atone for their sins.

And I said

No.

The High Priest said

But this is a great and noble thing

To die for all the people

And anyhow

You're only a goat.

And I said

No.

And he said

If you refuse

I don't know what I'll do.

Remember, you're only a goat.

And I said

No.

If it is such a great and noble thing

YOU do it, High Priest.

YOU go out into the desert

And die for their sins.

Look, here they are

I give their sins back to you.

I give their energy back to you.

And I flung them in his face

And went out of there

Into a wilderness of freedom.

Suggestions for De-Scapegoating

Flinging back to the dominant culture the scapegoat energies that the culture projects onto a disadvantaged or marginalized individual or group is one of the most healing things that scapegoated people can do for themselves.

It is, however, not usually a dramatic one-time occurrence (though sometimes especially dramatic and freeing moments can occur). It is usually a long-term process that can take years or decades and that has to be done again and again. Soto Zen practitioners know the meaning of such “gradual enlightenment” and the importance of keeping with such steady, sometimes imperceptible spiritual work. In secular American contexts, it is similar to practicing music or athletics, over and over again. This too requires patience.

It's not easy. This is a "via longissima", "an exceedingly long path". For many, it is a major part of their – our – life path.

But what to do in the meantime? Here are some suggestions for spiritual first aid in disidentifying from projective identification and cultural (or any form of) scapegoating.

-go someplace, physically or spiritually, where you are most YOU.

-do something that recenters and rebalances you. Forget about the projective identification for a while. Focus on yourself. Do what is most life-affirming. Do what makes you feel most YOU.

-Then do whatever helps to separate from the false not-you energies. Write, draw, take a walk, shout, eat some favorite foods, let go of the energies. Pray for protection from them too.

-If you feel so moved, follow Jesus’s teaching of “pray for those who persecute you.” Forgiveness is a very effective spiritual shield. But it may be for you – as it is for me – more on the “exceedingly long path” side of spiritual renewal, taking a very long time to forgive and heal.

It is possible to disidentify from the scapegoat archetype. It does take long, patient, steady work. Don't give up.

As many recovery programs say, "Work on it because you're worth it." You are. You truly are.

Part II – The Way Through: Stories of Hope

Chapter 3 - Stories of Hope

What archetypal energies are there – if any – that may dispose an individual to homelessness? To understand this, we need to consider what it is that connects an individual to this earth, what may disconnect him or her from this earth, and what energies may be sought as refuge, as sanctuary, as reconnection and healing.

In *The Visions Seminars* – a class that Jung taught in the 1930s and from which copious notes taken by students have been preserved and edited into book form – Jung notes that some people never entirely emerge from the pleroma into this world, this physical reality.^[9] The pleroma – in ancient Greek, literally, “fullness” – was, in ancient Gnostic understanding, a sort of waiting room, an in-between place, where souls waited to be born into this reality. It is possible, says Jung, that a soul may only partially get here. It may remain partly in the pleroma, only thinly anchored to this world.

It may also be possible that a soul in this world may undergo such a life-shattering experience that it flees back into the pleroma, back into what ancient Celtic religion called the other world, perhaps similar to what Sandra Ingerman in her book *Soul Retrieval* calls “the cave of lost souls”, and thus – out of life and death necessity – chooses to disconnect from this world to a greater or lesser extent in order to survive. One form of this is what object relations psychologist Harry Guntrip, in his *Object Relations, Schizoid Phenomena, and the Self*, called “the schizoid citadel”. An inner fortress is built, found, fled to, because outer reality has become so intolerable. A soul may flee to this inner refuge, this inner sanctuary, so deeply that it becomes nearly impossible to return to, to reconnect with, the outer human world.

Once this has happened, there may be a disconnect. It may be impossible to find a home in the outer physical world, particularly in the outer human world, because – on some level – the soul has so deeply renounced outer human reality. If freely entered into as a calling, as the freely willed choice of an individual, such a renunciation can have deep spiritual meaning. But if entered into as a “choice” of fear, as a survival necessity, as the only way to survive a life and death situation, such a renunciation can lead to an isolation that is ultimately neither calling nor refuge.

The medieval alchemists said: “As within, so without.” And over a thousand years before that, Jesus taught in Mark 11: “Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it shall be yours.” This is the basis of visualization.

Conscious visualization – as long as it brings a sense of humility to the visualizing and takes into account that God’s will may manifest in some other direction – may be a powerful avenue for transformation. But there is also a kind of energy focus that may take place in the unconscious that may bring about extremely negative results. This can occur if the energy configuration is sufficiently powerful to attract to itself what is similar in the outer world. The medieval alchemists spoke of the powerful effects of such energy configurations. New Age thinkers also believe that individuals can attract to themselves outer things similar to inner realities. The difference is that they may not be consciously willed. The individual’s shadow energy – especially if unconscious - may attract to itself horrible outcomes. And where the individual’s shadow energy – as in the instance of abuse survivors – meets the cultural shadow projection, where there is what Jung called a “hook” for the projection and the individual buys into it and experiences projective identification, where the projection feels ego-syntonic – that is, like it is part of oneself, instead of something outside of oneself - the result can be a catastrophic disaster.

The process of separating from projections, and from projective identification, as described in the previous chapter, can be a long and arduous one, particularly if the hook for the projection lies in early, powerful – sometimes powerfully negative – experiences. This process was well-known by the alchemists, in whose symbolic language Jung found depths of an understanding of the unconscious that sometimes surpassed even that of myths and fairytales.. The alchemists noted that the lapis, the mystical stone of transformation, is that “to which nothing superfluous has been added, and from which everything extraneous has been taken away.”^[10] To engage in such a process of purification can be a lifelong endeavor. Indeed, the alchemists themselves called their path a “via longissima” – “an exceedingly long path.”

This is not a recipe for hopelessness. As Jung describes in *Aion*,^[11] the fourth century A.D. Christian

philosopher Priscillian noted that Jesus is “beyond Heimarmene.” Heimarmene was, in antiquity, the ancient Greek term for the astrological fate that was “written in the stars” for any given individual. Saint Paul says in Colossians 3 that Jesus “took the decree that was written against us and nailed it to the cross”. In other words, Jesus cancelled out, neutralized, overcame Heimarmene, “the decree”.

But Priscillian does not say that Heimarmene does not exist. The predispositions of an individual’s life path are very real. They are there. But Priscillian says that they can be overcome. This is also implicit in the Christian concept of metanoia – the New Testament Greek term (since Saint Jerome’s Latin translation around 400 A.D. as “paenitentia” often incorrectly translated into English as “penitence”) which literally means a change of mind, a total transformation of one’s personality, mind, point of view – beyond Heimarmene. This is an act of willingness, but it is also ultimately an act of grace.

The individual who has experienced extreme trauma and its aftermath, its consequences, may indeed have three strikes against him or her. But with the Divine of many names, many aspects, many forms, however experienced, in whatever form or manifestation He or She or It may appear to any given individual, there is always a fourth chance, a fortieth chance, a four-billionth chance, and beyond.

Similarly, in the Jewish legendary tradition, in which it is said that when God renamed Abram Abraham and Sarai Sarah, He, God, gave to both Abraham and Sarah a letter of His own name, it is also said: “Abram could not beget a son. But Abraham could beget a son. Sarai could not nurse a child. But Sarah could nurse a child.” By accepting the gift of Divine energy, Abram and Sarai could become different people, partaking of God’s name. Here too Heimarmene is overcome.

In Orson Scott Card’s *Prentice Alvin*, Alvin Maker has many mystical and psychic abilities. He helps his friend Arthur Stuart, a young biracial boy, to escape the slavehunters by changing Arthur’s cellular makeup so that the slavehunters’ evil magic – used to track down slaves escaping to freedom – no longer works. The evil magic exists – Heimarmene exists – but once the deep essence of an individual is changed, he is no longer the same individual. Heimarmene no longer applies. As Saint Paul writes in his second letter to the Corinthians: “If anyone

is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away – behold, all things are made new.”

Every archetype is like a diamond, with many facets. Sometimes the healing energy is obvious. And sometimes, as the alchemists said of the lapis, the stone of transformation, “in stercore invenitur” – “it is found in the trash heap.” Marie-Louise von Franz, who was one of Jung’s first students in the 1930s and who herself became a pillar of Jungian psychology, writes that the telling and retelling the archetypal stories found in myths and fairytales brings with it a healing energy and can have a powerful healing effect. Jung himself noted that mythology is “a textbook of the archetypes”. For this reason, Jung recommended that children and young adults be taught fairytales and mythology, so that this healing energy – even if not fully understood on a conscious level at the time - would be available later, and especially in times of great need.

We no longer live in a culture – as both Jung (born in 1875) and von Franz (born in 1915) did - where it is common for children to learn the classical languages and to read the great epics early on. That culture, along with the trivium and quadrivium of classical education, vanished about two generations ago, at least in the U.S. (although efforts are being made to revive it). But it is never too late to turn to these archetypal realities, whether found in Scripture, in mythic stories, or in modern movies like the “Star Wars” series. The archetypes never disappear, but they may be eclipsed or “withdraw into seclusion”. As Jung notes, it is the task of each generation to rediscover these healing stories and to re-tell them in a – for the culture and for each unique individual – healing way.

Here in Part II, I retell some stories that have helped me with the issues of homelessness and home. Since I am a Latinist, with a primary focus on ancient Roman religion and mythology, the stories are drawn mostly from that source. Since I am a Jungian, they are re-told in a Jungian way. And since I am also a long-time science fiction reader and viewer – indeed, in childhood, that was virtually my only source of archetypal healing energies – two of those stories are retold here as well.

These stories are not a quick fixes, or once and for all solutions. They have not, as of this writing (2011), helped me to find a permanent, stable home. But they have given me hope and helped me to reconnect with the

archetype of home in a healing way. I hope they can help you, too.

Chapter 4 - The Aeneid: A Jungian Retelling

Companions, you who have suffered such terrible things ...

Through various disasters, through so many life and death situations,

We have stayed on course to Latium,

The place where the Fates show us stable peaceful homes ...

Stand firm, stay alive, and keep yourselves safe for more fortunate things. [\[12\]](#)

Introduction

The story of the founding of Rome is the story of how a country and a city were founded, against all odds.

Aeneas, once a great warrior, now a homeless wanderer (though not impoverished and not alone), comes from the ashes of a totally ruined Troy to Italy to found the nation which eventually becomes the Roman Empire.

Though the historicity of these legends may be suspect, their archetypal resonances provide a mythic framework for the rebuilding of home from a state of utter destruction.

On a personal note, the Aeneid came to me at a turning point in my life. I was at divinity school, exploring a calling to Protestant ministry, and having great difficulty with the fact – and it was a fact – that the academic fashion du jour was an atheistic deconstructionism that had absolutely nothing to do with spirituality, and in fact was utterly destructive to spirituality. A strange thing to find at a divinity school, perhaps – but recall our discussion of the shadow. Since most divinity schools (and many priests and ministers) see themselves as very virtuous and holy, and either are not conscious of, or deny the shadow, the shadow falls into the unconscious and is projected and/or acted out unconsciously. And what more appropriate shadow for a divinity school than an atheistic deconstructionism that seeks to destroy all connection with the Divine?

At the same time, I was reconnecting with Latin very intensively, working 20-30 hours a week to do in one semester the second year Latin program I had abandoned at Harvard over thirty years before. The story of Aeneas's change of focus, dashed hopes, and rebuilding - many times - out of the ashes, was deeply moving and seemed to uncannily echo the events in my own life. This retelling of the Aeneid is, for me, a thank offering to a work of ancient literature which was, and continues to be, moving, immediate, relevant - and lifesaving.

A note on relevance. Sometimes “relevance” is defined as modern, up-to-date, happened yesterday, read about it in the newspaper/see it on TV or on the Web. This is not my definition. What is most relevant is what most touches my heart and soul, whether it was written three minutes ago or three thousand years ago. Time is irrelevant. Aeneas, a great warrior who must radically shift his perspective after his home has been utterly shattered and destroyed, leads a band of homeless wanderers to a new home. Divinely guided, “through various disasters, through so many life and death situations,” as Aeneas himself describes it, they hold their course to their new homeland.

We are all Aeneas. We are all warriors of life. We are all on the journey to true home.

Aeneas

Aeneas was a great warrior who was on the losing side of one of the greatest of all mythic battles, the Trojan war. Archetypally, Aeneas represents a man who must change his point of view not only in order to survive but to fulfill his destiny as the founder of a new city.

Though this word shows up nowhere in The Aeneid and indeed would most likely have been incomprehensible to non-Christian ancient Romans for generations, what Aeneas essentially has is a profound conversion experience – the “metanoia” (to use the New Testament Greek term) the changing of one’s entire life in the service of transformation, mentioned many times in the Gospels. Aeneas has to shift from being a warrior willing to die in glorious battle to a man willing to live, survive, and become the founder of a new city. Though it goes

against every value he has hitherto held, Aeneas must flee the wreckage of burning Troy and, a homeless exile - though a wealthy one - wander for years until he is led to that place which the gods have determined is the site of his new city.

How does this shift happen? How does Aeneas go from a warrior stance which cannot accept retreat or defeat to the willingness to change his life to accept his destiny as founder of the Roman people?

The First Vision

In Book II of The Aeneid, Aeneas recounts his experience at the time of the destruction of Troy. The Trojan Horse has been taken within the walls of the city. All seems well. But unknowingly the elders of Troy have sown the seeds of their own destruction. Most Trojans, however, Aeneas included, assume that the war is over and that peace has come at last to Troy after this years-long struggle.

But then, in a dream, Aeneas has what might be called an inner vision. He sees Hector, the greatest of Trojan warriors, whom Aeneas last saw in his shining armor, victorious, and who indeed did die in battle, in an unkempt, bedraggled state. Hector's beard is matted with blood and he has many wounds.

Aeneas is horrified and attempts to find out what happened. Hector brushes all of Aeneas's inquiries aside as pointless and meaningless in this situation and tells him:

Flee, goddess-born, and save yourself from the flames.

The enemy holds the walls. Troy has fallen from her high place.

If any force of arms [literally “right hand “] could have saved

Troy, it would have been mine.

Troy entrusts her sacred things and her household gods to you.

Take them as companions of the Fates, and seek for them

The walls, those great walls, which you will build once you have

finally completed your wanderings throughout the seas.”

With his own hands he [Hector] brought forth from the innermost parts of the temple,

The sacred ribbons and mighty Vesta and the eternal flame.

“Hostis habet muros” - “the enemy holds the walls” - is the worst thing that can possibly happen, either militarily or psychologically. For the enemy to hold the walls is for the enemy to have breached the innermost defenses, the most sacred places. If the innermost walls are in shambles, sometimes there is no choice but to rebuild someplace else. This is Aeneas's situation.

There is no longer hope of salvaging the situation here. And Aeneas has a sacred destiny: to build the walls of Rome. Though he will not physically build those walls with his own hands - and, indeed, Rome itself will not be founded as a city until over 400 years after Aeneas flees from burning Troy - , Aeneas will lay the foundations, both physically and energetically, for the founding and the eventual rise of Rome.

Protecting the Sacred

The theme of the preservation of the sacred – especially, in this context, the sacred energies of home - in the face of the utter profanation of the sacred, echoes and re-echoes throughout Book II. Priam, the father of Hector and the king of Troy, has meanwhile realized that the enemy is not only at the gates. The enemy has entered the sacred walls of his home. In the next chapter, we will consider in more detail the meaning of walls as protectors of the sacred. But suffice it to say for now that they enclose the space within which home is experienced and protected as sacred,

Priam's home has been violated. Tottering and weak with age, he puts on his armor, and belts on his long-unused sword. But this is, as Vergil says, “nequiquam” - utterly, completely, totally useless and in vain. Hecuba, his wife, who, with their many daughters, has taken refuge in what used to be a sanctuary - a huge altar shaded by an ancient, sacred laurel tree - urges Priam to come be with them, under the protection of the gods. “Either the gods

will protect us,” she says, “or you will die here alongside of us.”^[13] (The laurel tree is sacred to Apollo, one of the gods who later guides Aeneas through his priests Helenus and the Sibyl.)

The latter indeed becomes Priam's fate. Pyrrhus, the son of Achilles, a rash and ruthless warrior, has no respect for the sacred. It was he who broke down the walls of Priam's home and killed two of Priam's sons, Hector and Polites. Priam challenges Pyrrhus with the unholiness of his behavior, but in vain. Pyrrhus drags Priam by his hair to the sacred altar, and, in an act of utter sacrilege, draws his sword and kills Priam. There is no refuge at the sacred altars, which are defiled by the murderers, by the very blood, of those who honored them and worshipped there and felt safe and protected there.

Anyone who has ever experienced any kind of spiritual or religious - or anti-religious - abuse can identify with Priam's, Hecuba's, and - especially - Aeneas's dilemma. To attempt to stand one's ground and to save the sacred one knows, or to flee? If one flees, is one betraying the sacred? How can one ever find safety again?

In his vision, Aeneas receives an answer to this question from Hector: “Troy entrusts her sacred things and her household gods to you. Seek for them those walls - those great walls - which you will build once you have finally completed your wanderings throughout the seas.”^[14]

Much as he loves Troy, and it all it means to him, Aeneas must come to realize that he needs to found a new sanctuary for what is most sacred to him. His mission is to take with him and those who flee with him those sacred energies, symbolized by the sacred headbands (vittas), “mighty Vesta” and Her eternal flame, and the household gods (penates) of Troy, and go forth to his destined land.

Like Abraham in the Old Testament - to whom God says only “go forth, from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you” (Genesis 12) - Aeneas has to similarly, in an act of utter faith, abandon all he has known - including his allegiance to the heroic honor code of an ancient warrior, which would command him, even if defeat and destruction were certain, to stay and defend his city to the death

and sacrifice his life for nothing - and become the founder of a new city in an unknown land. So, taking with him the beings most precious to him - carrying his father, Anchises, on his shoulders, leading his little son Ascanius (also known as Iulus, ancestor of the Julians, from whom Julius Caesar and the Roman Emperors were legendarily descended) by the hand, and carrying the precious household gods (penates), Aeneas leaves Troy forever.

False Paths That Look Like True Paths

At the beginning of Book III of the Aeneid, Aeneas's father Anchises, who has special knowledge of the omens and auguries of the gods, orders that the sails be opened to the winds of fate, so that the wanderers are carried where the winds will. Aeneas and his fleet are blown to Thrace, which had an ancient treaty of friendship with Troy. So Aeneas immediately assumes that this is the destined land where he is to build his city.

But then a terrible thing happens. After offering sacrifices of thanks, a plant starts to bleed human blood, and a voice proclaims that Polydorus is buried here. He was an envoy of Troy who was betrayed and murdered by the Thracian king in an act of total faithlessness. Like Hector in Aeneas's vision in Book II, Polydorus tells Aeneas to flee: "Flee these cruel lands and this shore of greedy men ... he has destroyed all that is sacred." This is a place where the very earth cries out regarding the destruction of the sacred. Aeneas and his men decide to set sail for the sacred island of Delos, to inquire of Apollo where they should go. This is what they are told:

Tough Dardanians [Trojans], the land that first brought you forth from the parental offspring,

Gladly nourishing you, will receive you again as you are led back.

Seek your ancient mother.

There the house of Aeneas will rule over all the shores

And his sons' sons and those who are born from them. [\[15\]](#)

Thus, Aeneas is told by the oracle of Apollo to seek his roots, his origins: "seek your ancient mother." That is where he is supposed

to found his city. In Jungian psychology, “anamnesis of the origins” means a reconnection with, and sometimes rediscovery of, one’s sacred roots. As Jung notes in *Aion*, if an individual is cut off from their roots, “anamnesis of the origins is a matter of life and death.”^[16] But where are those roots for Aeneas and his followers?

Aeneas's father Anchises, wise in the ways of interpreting the signs and omens of the goddesses and gods, believes that Apollo's oracular wisdom regarding settling where their first ancestor settled is meant to direct them to Crete:

Crete is an island of great Jove, that lies in the middle of the sea ...

From there the great father - if I am recalling the traditions correctly -

Teucus first arrived at the Trojan shores, and chose a place for the kingdom.

They had not yet built Troy and the strongholds of Pergama; they were living in very low valleys.

There was the nourishing Mother Cybele, and the high Corybantian airs,

And the faithful silences of the sacred ceremonies,

And the lions yoked under the chariot of the Mistress. [the Great Mother of Asia Minor, Cybele.]

So be up and about - let us follow the commands of the gods ...

Let us seek the Cretan kingdoms. If only Juppiter is present,

On the third day the fleet may rest on Cretan shores.^[17]

Anchises is drawing on a tradition that Teucus is the ancestral energy with which Aeneas and his followers must connect. Connected to this energy is also the energy of Juppiter and the Great Mother, Cybele, who was worshipped in antiquity, from very ancient times - at first in Asia Minor, and then later in Rome and throughout the Roman Empire.

So this seems clear enough. They set sail for Crete, arrive there safely, and start building their new city. As Aeneas describes the process:

The ships were nearly drawn up on the dry shore
The young people were occupied with marriages and new fields,
And I was giving laws and homes;
When suddenly a destructive plague came upon limbs
and trees and plants;
A death-bringing year. [letifer annus]
Men gave up their sweet spirits, and dragged their weakened bodies;
Sirius burned the planted fields to barrenness,
and the weakened grainfield denied food. [\[18\]](#)

It is a picture of utter barrenness and desolation, made worse by the high and hopeful expectations, and the suddenness with which the pestilence strikes. But it is not only a physical pestilence; like similar passages in Scripture, it also portends a spiritual barrenness. In Psalm 63, the Psalmist cries out to God, praying to Him “from a land where there is no water.”

It may be instructive to look at this Psalm in some detail, since it so nearly parallels the experience of Aeneas and his companions. Saint Jerome, translating the Bible into Latin around 400 A.D., shortly before the fall of the Roman Empire, when desolation was at the threshold, understood this psalm as follows:

A psalm of David when he was in the desert of Judaea
Oh God, my God ... My soul thirsts for you ...,
In a desert land, a land without roads, a land without water. [\[19\]](#)

Similarly, Helenus, the prophet of Apollo, tells Aeneas that he will have to cross a “wayless way” to get to his true home. [\[20\]](#)

When one is trapped in desolation, and there seems no way out - “a land without roads,” Jerome calls this state -

it may be almost impossible to keep faith. One has taken a false path, which has sent one wandering about in a desert of falseness. This is when it is especially important to pray for hope, to pray for a way through, and to look - Jerome says "to keep watch" - for any signs of new growth, newness, resurrection, however tiny, and to thank the Divine when those signs appear: "Thus I will bless You in my life; in Your name I will lift up my hands."

Sometimes the wasteland comes upon one gradually, over a period of many years: a gradual drying up of a relationship, an interest, a job, even a whole career. And sometimes it comes suddenly, as it happens to Aeneas, in a situation which seems full of hope and new life.

Personal Excursus

In my own life, the experience of the wasteland happened in an especially intense form during a year when I thought I was exploring a call to ordained Protestant ministry by taking classes at a local divinity school. What I discovered about halfway through my first term there was that, for many of the "teachers" I encountered, spirituality was a game to be played in order to score points for mounting the professorial ladder. Points were scored in this terrible "game" by being as ironic and "sophisticated" as possible, and by attacking and putting down all forms of spirituality, so that the classroom became an arid intellectual wasteland. The problem with this "game" was that it put people's lives, their very souls, at risk.

And sometimes this deadly energy was not recognized until it was too late - or, for me, nearly too late. From one graduate student I heard that it was no longer possible for him to study the Bible as a resource of spiritual strength. From another, I was likewise told to my horror about serious physical ailments, including some signs of heart disease - clearly related to the heart chakra (energy center) - which had come as a direct result of these anti-spiritual studies.

The prophet Jeremiah speaks of "wells, broken wells, that do not contain water." This was my experience of the divinity school which I attended. I am convinced that I nearly died there,

physically, emotionally, psychologically. The only thing that kept me going were the Latin classes I took at a nearby university, for which I am profoundly grateful. In those classes, even when the emphasis was mainly on grammar, I found a greater respect for ancient teachings than in the so-called spiritually oriented classes at the divinity school.

To me, this ironic destructive energy seemed devoted to death, in the sense in which Jung speaks of this energy in “The Psychology of the Transference.” There Jung quotes an alchemical saying: “Et reviviscit, quod fuerat morti deditum, post inopiam magnam.” [\[21\]](#)

“And that which had been dedicated/given over to death came back to life, after great poverty.” These deconstructionists clearly did not get beyond the first word of the alchemical saying of transformation: “Solve et coagula” – “dissolve and reunite” (literally, “solidify”). They excelled at “dissolving”, at taking things apart destructively, without respect for ancient traditions or teachings. And they had no concept of re-uniting, of synthesizing, of bringing together once more into a whole. They devoted themselves to death, not to life.

Everywhere at this divinity school I saw sacrifices to death, to an arid intellectualism that had nothing in it of humility or surrender to the Divine. It was pretentious, false, and, worst of all, spiritually deadly. Like Aeneas, I found myself in a place which I deeply expected to be a spiritual home, a place of growth and newness and new beginnings. It was not. For me, divinity school was akin to Aeneas's experience of Crete. Aeneas, along with his spiritually learned and experienced father Anchises, expected Crete to be home. And it too was not. The experience that Aeneas, Anchises, and their companions had of that time was that of a “letifer annus” - “a deathbringing year.” But they realized their mistake and left.

And so did I, thanks be to God. In that “deathbringing year” and in my escape from it, *The Aeneid* was a light in the darkness, a guide to the way through.

Escaping the Wasteland

Part of the puzzle is allowing one's spiritual perceptions in, when they seem to contradict the nature of outer

reality. Jesus speaks to this point in Mark 4, when he explains the parable of the seed:

And the seed that is sown among thorns: These are those who hear the word; but the worries of this age, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the

word, and it becomes unfruitful. [\[22\]](#)

Jesus is describing a situation where everyday life chokes off the initial contact with the Spirit. Spirit is not integrated into everyday life. Spirit is denied. It's not clear if people in the parable are even aware -unlike the Psalmist, who is agonizingly aware- that they have lost their connection with Spirit.

But Aeneas is aware. Something is terribly wrong. It is a disaster, a drought, of epic proportions. Men and beasts die. The earth dries up and cannot bring forth food. It is a "letifer annus" - "a death-bringing year." In the place that is supposed to bring life and hope there is widespread death. What is happening? What is the best path to recovering the sacred and life itself?

Aeneas's father, Anchises, urges a return to the sacred island of Delos, to inquire further of Apollo's oracle. And Aeneas is willing to do this, to give up a way that seemed full of hope but is in fact a way of death, and to retrace his steps to the sacred island, to begin again.

And perhaps it is this willingness itself that opens the door to what happens next. For again, as was the case with the impending disaster that was averted by Aeneas's vision of Hector, in an inner vision, Aeneas is told what is happening and what he must do. This time the household gods of Troy, whom he has rescued from the flames, appear to him:

It was night, and in the lands sleep had taken hold of animals:

The sacred images of the gods, the Phrygian household gods (Penates),

Whom I had brought out with me from Troy, from the middle of the fires of the city,

I saw standing before my eyes, lying closed in sleep, clear in much light,

Which the full moon was pouring in through the inset windows;

Thus they spoke and took away my cares with these words:

“What to you, if you were to go back to Delos, Apollo would say,

He prophesies here; and, behold, he sends us of his own free will to your thresholds.

We have traveled, under your guidance, with your fleets, across the swollen sea

We shall raise up your descendants who are to come,

And we shall give to them command of the City.

You - prepare great walls for these great ones who are to come,

And don't abandon the long labor of the journey.

The dwelling place MUST be changed. The Delian did not offer you these shores,

Nor did Apollo command you to settle here in Crete.

“There is a place, which the Greeks call “Hesperia,” an ancient land,

Mighty in arms and rich in agriculture. The Oenotrians have colonized it;

Now they call it “Italy.”

THIS is our rightful dwelling. Here Dardanus originated,

And father Iasius, the people from whom our leader has come.

Come, stand up, and report these sayings, which are not at all to be doubted,

to your long-lived father: Let him seek Corythum and the Ausonian lands.

Juppiter denies to you the Cretan fields.” [\[23\]](#)

In a spiritual wasteland, it is important to pray for a way out and to recognize the signs of resurrection, however small and faint, when they appear. And it is important to recognize when one has strayed, for however good a reason, onto a false path, a wrong way - and to return to the right way, the right path, true path, which is unique for each individual. As Richard Wilhelm notes in his commentary on the I Ching, in hexagram 24, the hexagram

of Return – also about returning to true path, to the right way: “No one will regret having taken this way.”^[24]

Sometimes the signs are neither small nor faint. For Aeneas, they are, here, shocking and compelling. He wakes up suddenly, shaken, his whole body covered by icy sweat. Aeneas has not undertaken the journey back to Delos. He has not moved physically at all. But a powerful spiritual experience has occurred.

Aeneas immediately offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the gods for this vision and their guidance. Like the Psalmist, he, too, lifts up his hands to thank the gods. He then goes to report this vision of the Penates to his father.

Anchises understands at once. He realizes that he has mistaken the Trojans' dual ancestry. It is true that Crete is ancestral land. But it is the wrong ancestor. It is not Crete that they must seek for the place of their new city. It is Italy, which ultimately leads to Rome. For them, Crete can only be a death-bringing land, a house of death. They cannot stay. They will never flourish there. If they stay there, they will die. They need to leave it at once.

For me, at the divinity school I was attending, the sense grew and grew that I was in the wrong place - in a spiritually death-bringing place. From spiritual guides I heard terrifying directions: “Flee from death place.” The warnings escalated, in dreams, teachings, inner visions, until I could no longer ignore them. Though I had thought I was coming to a place of life, a spiritual home, I had in fact come to what was for me (and, I fear, for many others) a place of death. It took many months for me to heed the warnings, but at last I did.

In terms of Aeneas's journey, this is the first time that a clear, concrete direction has been revealed to Aeneas for his wanderings, that the place of his future city has been concretely foretold. When Anchises ponders these new instructions, he realizes that a radical shift in direction must occur. They set sail for Italy at once.

Withstanding the Terrible Mother

Throughout the Aeneid, Aeneas encounters Terrible Mother energy that thwarts his plans and at times nearly kills

him – and which does kill many of his followers. Let us review this concept, mentioned above in Chapter 2. In Jungian psychology, the Terrible Mother is that aspect of female archetypal energy which seeks to destroy the creative impulse and sometimes life itself. Erich Neumann, in *The Great Mother*, identifies several aspects of this archetypal energy. ^[25] The Terrible Mother may oppress or destroy in a physical way, withholding food, shelter, clothing - a death sentence for a vulnerable child and often for older people as well. This is, in fact, the terrible sentence that this culture imposes upon homeless people. She may also engage in spiritual seduction, spinning a web of illusion which unbalances her prey and makes them much more vulnerable to attack.

How may one recognize and withstand this energy? Aeneas – who is referred to throughout the *Aeneid* as “pius Aeneas”, “religiously dutiful Aeneas” – finds guidance from connecting to his rock-steady calling in what becomes a dangerous and ultimately life-threatening dilemma.

In Book IV of the *Aeneid*, on the way to Italy, their destined land, he and his men have been blown off course. They land near Carthage in North Africa, a colony founded by the Phoenicians, an ancient Semitic people akin to the Canaanites and Hebrews. The queen of this colony is Dido. She almost immediately falls in love with Aeneas. This occurs, according to Vergil, through the agency of Eros, sent by Venus, who has been convinced by Juno to do this. Juno represents a Terrible Mother figure throughout most of *The Aeneid*, who constantly thwarts Aeneas's true path and throws him off-course, until Aeneas at last makes his peace with Her.

Whose City Is He Building?

As the intricate Book IV plot unfolds, Dido manages - perhaps unconsciously - to so entrap and ensnare Aeneas (these are energies very characteristic of the Terrible Mother) that he reaches a point where he is actually helping Dido to build *her* city, Carthage.

This is important. Aeneas has, for the time being, abandoned his plans to journey to his own destined land, Italy, and to build his own city. He has abandoned his own calling, his own true path. He is pouring out his energy on

building someone else's city.

Often in a person's life there is a temptation to work on someone else's projects, dreams, visions - someone else's "city." Modern Western culture calls this co-dependency. In *The Aeneid*, it is Aeneas who is portrayed as having lost his central direction, his inner guide, his inner compass.

This information first comes to Aeneas in a startling way. One of the jealous suitors of Dido has complained in his prayers to Jupiter (probably the Semitic god Ba'al is meant) that Aeneas has stolen Dido from him. Jupiter is thus reminded that Aeneas is tarrying in Carthage, following someone else's dream and destiny, rather than seeking his own. Jupiter decides to send down Mercury, the messenger of the gods. He calls Mercury to him and orders him to bring the following message to Aeneas:

Go on, son, call the west winds and glide down on your wings,
Speak to the Trojan leader, who is now delaying at Tyrian Carthage,
And is not paying any attention to the cities given by the Fates.
Swiftly bring down my commands to him through the upper airs.
His most beautiful mother [Venus] did not promise us such a man
When twice indeed she saved him from the Greeks' weapons.
No indeed - she promised us that he would be the kind of man who could rule over an Italy
Heavy with commanding powers, and eager for war - that she would bring forth
A people from the high blood of Teucus, that he would place the whole world under the laws.
If the glory of such things does not inspire him,
And if he does not wish to labor for his own sake,
What about his son Ascanius? Will he deny his son the Roman strongholds?
Whose city is he building?
Or with what hope is he dragging his feet among an enemy people?
Why isn't he seeking the Ausonian people and the Lavinian shores?
Let him set sail! This is the gist of it - go be our messenger with this message.

“Whose city is he building?” This is the main point. Aeneas is not paying attention (non respicit) to his duty. He is not building his own city. He is building someone else's city. This can be death to the soul.

Saint Paul, in 2 Corinthians 9, expresses it as “casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, leading into captivity all paradigms of thinking, into obedience to Christ.” (King James translation, somewhat modified).^[26] “Obedience to Christ” in this context can be taken as meaning living one's life in accord with one's truest nature - the nature that the Divine has created, and one's calling according to that nature.

Aeneas has gotten off track from his bestowed mission, from fulfilling his true purpose in life. Mercury, the messenger of the gods, brings him this message and calls him strongly back to return to his true path. It is also no accident that, on a deeper level, it is Mercury, the guide of souls, with affinities to the Egyptian God of wisdom, Thoth, and the Greek god of sudden revelations, Hermes, who brings this message to Aeneas.

As soon as Aeneas receives this message, he again realizes - as in Crete - that something is very terribly wrong. In Crete, the signs were clear: pestilence, starvation, physical death. The signs of spiritual death are often much less clear. Sometimes it takes the message of a god to shake a person up sufficiently to realize that something is wrong and to begin to correct it. In our secular “modern” world such indications can come, as we have seen them come for Aeneas, in inner visions or dreams – if properly understood, and not just shrugged off. Even worse in Jungian terms, is to only understand a dream aesthetically (“oh, what an interesting dream”) without acting on the dream in one’s outer life. And sometimes such messages occur not in the form of dreams, but – as indeed for Aeneas - in the form of spiritual or psychological crises, or as sudden upheavals in one’s outer life.

Sometimes there is a fine line between extreme emotional disturbance and an experience of the numinous. Discernment in such an instance may be difficult. Aeneas, however, feels and knows the difference. He is extremely disturbed in his mind and spirit - the text calls him “crazy” (amens). (Similarly, people in a state of spiritual emergency, who are experiencing metanoia, a total lifechanging shift of perspective and attitude, without validating help, often think of themselves as “crazy” and are diagnosed - in fancier language - as “crazy” by many within the mental health establishment.) His hair stands on end and his voice sticks in his throat. But he knows the source of disturbance. He is terrified, stunned by this strong warning and command of the gods. He feels confused, doesn't know what to tell Dido, turns here and there in his thoughts. But he is certain that he must leave. He calls his subcommanders to him and orders them to prepare for departure.

The subcommanders are described as “joyful” (laeti). This is a common reaction - along with the awe of meeting the divine - to returning to true path. It is the feeling, in different terminologies, of aligning oneself with the Divine’s will for one's life, of being in the Tao, of returning to one's truest nature.

Dido and Terrible Mother Energy

But there is still Dido to contend with. Terrible Mother energy is extremely insidious. Dido herself, at this point, may not realize that she is channeling it.

Terrible Mother energy can take many forms. In ancient Near Eastern mythology, it was exemplified by the sea monster Tiamat. The Babylonian hero god Marduk killed her, thus freeing the world from terrible fear. Extreme fear is one sign of the presence of the Terrible Mother. Tiamat also was a bringer of chaos.

The Terrible Mother also can freeze all initiative and drain the will. The Latin adjective “exanimis” - drained, depleted, feeling powerless - well describes this state. In mythology, perhaps the most well-known figure who causes this energy pattern to arise is the ancient Greek figure of Medusa. As we saw in Chapter 2, she, like her two sisters, was one of the Gorgons who dwelt in a far place. When she looked at humans, they turned to stone. This is an apt description of the energy state in which this form of Terrible Mother energy leaves anyone whom it touches: depleted, without the will to be active on one’s own behalf in the outer human world, or sometimes even to survive.

In *The Aeneid*, Dido alludes to this soothing, paralyzing, disempowering energy of the Terrible Mother when she speaks of the priestess who soothes and lulls to sleep the dragon of the Hesperides with herbs. Sleep is important, but if it is the “sleep” of Medusa's paralysis, it is deadly. Even in the hands of the apparently kindly Lotus Eaters whom Odysseus encounters, ceasing to care about sailing for home is extremely destructive. Erich Neumann points out that the understanding of herbs, medicines, and energies was originally in the realm of the Feminine – thus the “lotuses” of the Lotus Eaters.^[28] In the hands of the Good Mother (of any gender), this knowledge of plants and herbal medicines can be healing. In the hands of the Terrible Mother, it can mean languor, dissolution, and ultimately death.

Once the lotuses are consumed, in physical or in energy form, unknowingly, foolishly, or arrogantly, a vast disempowerment kicks in. Everything seems like too much effort and ultimately useless. This feeling may be abetted by actual outer-world systemic problems.

It is not impossible to escape from this state of depletion and disempowerment. But it can take years. It's not clear how long exactly Aeneas spends his time at Carthage, but it is at least several months and arguably much longer. He nearly loses his mission and his soul there. But he comes to his senses, over a period of time, and with divine help. Jupiter sends Mercury, the messenger of the gods, to bring Aeneas, with some harsh words, to the realization that he needs to leave Carthage and set about searching for the place of, and building, his own city.

Aeneas, who essentially has been in league with Dido, starts secretly preparing to leave Carthage. But he is dragging his feet, perhaps hoping for a final reconciliation with Dido. Mercury comes again, this time in the middle of the night, and awakens Aeneas with a message that is bone-chilling:

Don't you see the dangers that surround you? She [Dido] has decided on death.

Why do you not flee swiftly, while fleeing is still possible?

If Dawn touches you still delaying in these lands, you will see the wreckage of your ships on the sea, and the shore gleaming with torches, and fires everywhere, [\[29\]](#)

Aeneas awakens suddenly, shaken and in a cold sweat. He finally understands the life and death nature of his situation. Though it is the middle of the night, he immediately proceeds to awaken his men and to urge them to prepare to leave immediately. In a powerful moment, Aeneas himself snatches out his sword from its sheath and strikes the ropes that have been holding his own ship, the flagship, to the shore. This simple yet decisive physical act has tremendous symbolic significance. It is a shattering of his false and destructive league with Dido. At one stroke, Aeneas frees himself and his men from the trap that has nearly killed him and all their hopes.

In his writings on Terrible Mother energy (1955), Erich Neumann notes that one symbol for the effect of Terrible Mother energy is that of binding, entwining. [\[30\]](#) Though there are sacred energy bindings, such as holy vows, Aeneas has been falsely bound to Carthage by Dido's fierce energy. With this symbolic act of cutting the ropes, he both physically prepares to leave and energetically cuts the binding that has held him fast - not only in league

with Dido and Carthage, but to a way of life that has prevented him from following his true path.

Aeneas has dragged his feet and almost been caught permanently in Dido's trap. Yet - thanks to the intervention of Mercury - he escapes certain death at the last moment. He and his men take to the ships and set sail. He dissolves his false league with someone else's city and path, and leaves Carthage behind forever.

Another Attack By the Terrible Mother

But the Terrible Mother energy does not relinquish its hold so easily. There is a strong indication in Book III, when Helenus, the prophet of Apollo, tells Aeneas of future perils on his journey and how to avoid them, that Aeneas needs to come into right relation with the Feminine. Helenus counsels Aeneas to offer right sacrifices to Juno and thus to appease her wrath. Aeneas does eventually do this, and Juno's energy finally shifts towards the end of *The Aeneid*.

The Terrible Mother energy becomes extremely prominent in Book V, where Aeneas and his men are resting and engaging in athletic games before proceeding on their journey. At first, there is just a hint of this energy, in the form of a labyrinthine dance performed by the Trojan young men, including Aeneas's son Ascanius, also known as Iulus (the legendary founder of the Julian *gens* or clan, including Julius Caesar). Vergil describes the labyrinth in a few chilling lines:

So it is said of the Cretan Labyrinth of old,
A path woven of blind walls, a double-edged trick of a thousand ways,
In which an insoluble maze from which no one ever returns
Breaks the signs of right guidance. [\[31\]](#)

This is a description of a subtle form of Terrible Mother energy, entrapping and ensnaring its victims, “break[ing] the signs of right guidance.” As Donald Kalsched points out with reference to abuse survivors in *The Inner World of Trauma*, sometimes there may arise a path in an individual's life that appears to lead out of abuse and

deprivation. Yet it actually leads more deeply into the labyrinth, into the trap.^[32] There are indeed healing forms of the labyrinth, used for prayer and meditation, known from very ancient times onward. In the Middle Ages, labyrinth designs were incorporated into many churches. They still may be found today, in or near some churches and outdoor areas. But this labyrinthine energy is a labyrinth of death.

Here the trap seems to be Aeneas's relaxation and focus on the athletic contests. While he and his men are enjoying themselves -and certainly it is a well-deserved rest - Juno has in the meantime sent down Iris, the female messenger of the gods, to deceive and entrap the Roman matrons (mature Roman women of high status). She begins by taking on the form of a matron herself and encouraging them to stay here, in Sicily – not to continue the journey to their destined land. She also invents a prophecy – a lie - which she attributes to Cassandra (respected throughout Troy as a great prophetess, though one often discounted and disbelieved) of burning ships. The matrons are tricked, taken in, led astray, and go into a frenzied state. They take fire from wherever they can find it, including the sacred hearths, and set the ships on fire.

So what Dido did not manage to accomplish – the disaster that would have happened if Aeneas had lingered for even a few more hours in Carthage - happens in a different form in Sicily. The ships are set on fire, and despite the best, heroic efforts of Aeneas and his men, it appears that they are totally destroyed.

At this point, Aeneas rips off his shirt, lifts his hands heavenwards, and cries out to Jupiter, wondering aloud if there is any point to his prayers - “if you don't already hate the Trojans to a man.”^[33] He implores Jupiter for help. And no sooner has he finished speaking than there is a torrential downpour, with extremely heavy rains putting out the flames. Only a few ships are totally lost. The remaining ships are no longer burning, but they are smoldering hulks, in ruins, unseaworthy, unable to sail anywhere.

In his despair, Aeneas wonders whether this entire journey is pointless - whether he should just forget about his destiny - at this point his “so-called” destiny is probably what he's thinking - and just stay in Sicily.

But at this momentous turning point, Aeneas comes upon Nautes, a prophet of Athena, who explains to him the difference between fate and bad luck:

Where fate leads us, and leads us back, we must follow.

But misfortune must be overcome by endurance. ^[34]

Nautes advises Aeneas to leave behind those men who have lost their ships, along with the older men and women who can no longer endure ocean voyages, and all those who are no longer supportive of Aeneas's difficult journeying.

But Aeneas is still doubtful and discouraged. In the night, however, he receives a vision of his father Anchises, who addresses him as his beloved son, and says that he has been sent at the command of Jupiter, who in fact does care, who in fact rescued Aeneas and his men, “who drove away the fire from the ships.” ^[35] What Aeneas needs to do, says Anchises, is to follow the good advice of Nautes and to take the most courageous young men with him to Italy. There he will need to fight fiercely for his new home. Symbolically, this is a leaving behind of all doubts and hesitations before embarking boldly and with total focus on the new way. Similarly, Jesus says (in Mark 11) that the individual who does not waver (*non haesitaverit*) in his heart and who believes that whatever he asks for in prayer he has already received, will receive it. ^[36] This sometimes requires, as here, a decisive break with the old pattern, the old way of being. As Jesus is also quoted as saying: “No one who, having placed his hand on the plow, looks backwards, is fit for service (*aptus*) in the kingdom of Heaven.” ^[37]

The End of the Old Cycle

But no new way is entered into without sacrifice. Just as Aeneas's ships arrive at Cumae, to consult the oracular priestess, the Sibyl, there, Palinurus, the steersman who has gotten Aeneas and his companions through so many dangerous situation at sea through his steadiness, knowledge of the stars, and seafaring, is lost overboard. On a

symbolic level, the steersman of the old cycle cannot guide Aeneas and his men any further. He can no longer steer the ship as it enters into the new cycle. The directing energy of the old cycle must be sacrificed in order to safely enter into the new cycle. In Jungian psychology, this is sometimes referred to as “ego death” – a transformation of the personality that is so powerful that a new ego needs to emerge in order to carry on.

Both culturally and in an individual's life, there are often powerful mythic indications that an old cycle is ending. In *Lord of the Four Quarters*, an exploration of the archetypal foundations of kingship, Jungian analyst John Weir Perry notes that the Etruscan chief god, Tinia - cognate to Jupiter in the Roman tradition - sends a “fateful thunderbolt” to end the old cycle.^[38] In *Thespis*, Theodore Gaster, an ancient Near Eastern and classical scholar, discusses the archetypal mythic patterns that accompany the end of one cycle and the beginning of a new cycle. Often there is an interregnum, a period of chaos and confusion, after the old cycle comes to an end. This is followed by a decisive battle between the new king (or the renewed old king) and the forces of chaos.^[39] Order is reestablished, but in a new way.

Journey Through Liminality

In Chapter 2 we saw how liminality can be the doorway to a life-transforming initiatory experience, if properly met and understood. For seven years, Aeneas and his men have been in liminal space, being gradually led to their new homeland. Now - as is often the case - there is one more profound journey into liminality that must be undertaken before the final commitment to the outer-world task of founding Rome. This time, though, Aeneas - as representative both of his followers now and of the future people of Rome - goes alone with the Sibyl, the prophetess of Apollo at Cumae, into the underworld. It is only when he emerges from this life-changing spiritual journey in the inner world that he and his followers can proceed to Latium, where - after many struggles - they can build their new city in the outer human world.

The New Cycle

The new cycle begins, as is likewise often the case, with an intimation of the spiritual journey ahead. On arriving at Cumae, the first sight Aeneas encounters is a mysterious one. The famous craftsman Daedalus, who built the labyrinth on Crete to trap the Minotaur, but which later became his own trap, after his escape landed on Cumae, and produced art to illustrate Cretan scenes. One of those scenes was of the labyrinth. The structure, hinted at in Book V, now comes closer to Aeneas's reality. And although Aeneas is not faced with a physical labyrinth, both throughout his journeyings and especially now at Cumae, he is faced with a spiritual and energy labyrinth.

As he ponders the meaning of the labyrinth and the other artwork, the messenger whom he has sent to inform the Sybil of his arrival returns, along with the Sibyl. She rebukes Aeneas: "This is no time to gape at pictures!" Then she urges him to commitment: "Are you stopping in your vows, Trojan Aeneas? Are you stopping? The doors of the awestruck temple will not open until you have completed your prayers."^[40] Aeneas has to commit himself, in the presence of the divine, to his true path.

And his prayers do continue. He asks that the Trojan misfortune, the Trojan run of bad luck, stop right here, right now, and that they fulfill their destiny. And he asks - as an earlier prophet of Apollo, Helenus, had advised - to be allowed to journey to his father's spirit in the underworld, to ask for his advice.

The Sibyl, in a prophetic trance, first responds to Aeneas' prayer to build his far-off city, his destined city - the city which does not yet exist, but – somewhat like the "heavenly Jerusalem" – is yet to come. It will not, she warns him, be an easy task:

Oh you who have at last completed the dangerous tasks on the sea -

But even more dangerous ones await you on land. The Trojans

will get to Italy - don't worry about that. But they will wish that they had never come.

I foresee wars, terrible wars.... But you, don't give way to your misfortunes, but to the contrary go out far more boldly than your fortune would permit. The first way of salvation, though you think it least, will open up from a Greek city.

The Sibyl is clearly telling Aeneas that the old cycle has been completed. The old cycle is at an end. Though he is not quite physically there yet, in fact his journeying is at an end. The difficulties lying ahead are even worse than the difficulties he has already passed through. But they have a different flavor. He is almost at a place where his vision and true path can be realized. The beginning of actualizing the goal is almost at hand. He is almost in the right place. Now he must build a homeland and a home. All of his efforts must now be focused on this.

Aeneas is aware of this. In terms of his outer-world tasks, he tells the Sybil that he has turned over and over in his mind what lies ahead. He knows of the difficulties. But he accepts them as a necessary part of, and preliminary to, his new life. The liminal period has almost ended - perhaps not as Aeneas would have expected or wished. He has encountered much tragedy on the way and, in Book V, nearly abandoned his mission. But through the help of Athena's prophet, Nautes, a miracle sent by Jupiter, and his own steadfastness ("stand firm, and keep yourselves safe for better things")^[41] he was able to continue. This is the point of transition between the "Odyssey" aspect of the Aeneid and its "Iliad" aspect, between wandering in search of a homeland and fighting from the basis of and for one's true homeland, between liminality and incorporation.

Aeneas's final liminal task is this dangerous journey, with the Sibyl as guide, to the underworld. Aeneas knows that he must journey there for guidance from the spirit of his father. This journey, often referred to in Jungian terms as a *katabasis* (a journeying below) or "the night sea journey," is perilous and even deadly. How can Aeneas journey safely into the darkness and return?

The Sibyl instructs him to go into a shady forest and to pluck from a tree the mysterious golden bough, which will lead him safely into the darkness and safely out. It is an offering specified by "lower Juno," by Proserpina (Persephone).^[42] Thus Aeneas is taught, paradoxically, by a prophetess of the light - Apollo energy - that he must effect a rapprochement with the Dark Feminine to survive this journey. The Sibyl further adds: "If the fates are calling you, [the golden bough] will come easily and willingly;/But if not, you cannot tear it off with hard iron

or with any amount of force.”^[43] And, indeed, a little later, Aeneas, guided by doves, the sacred birds of his mother Venus, is led to the golden bough and is able easily to pluck it off and to bring it to the Sibyl.

For the perilous journey into - and out of - spiritual or psychological darkness, some sense of that sacred energy that provides a saving, healing light in the darkness is absolutely necessary for survival. There is a - perhaps apocryphal - story that Jung and a well-known writer once met. The writer is supposed to have asked what the difference was between himself (who found in writing a form to express his difficult energies) and his daughter (who was diagnosed as schizophrenic). Jung replied: “You dive. She falls.”

In order to “dive,” it is absolutely necessary to have some sort of guiding presence in the darkness that is not of the darkness. As Jung points out, when the Gospel of John says, “And the light shone in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it,”^[44] part of the meaning is that what overcomes the darkness can never be of the same nature of darkness.^[45] The golden bough is entirely other - not like any other plant on earth, not like the darkness through which it is a protection, a shield, a token and a creator of safety.

Aeneas, because it is his assigned fate, his “bestowed mission,” is able to find and take up the golden bough. But he does not keep it for himself. Significantly, as soon as he finds it, he immediately plucks it off and takes it to the prophetess, the Sibyl. He has the humility to realize that she is the one who would be the proper guardian of this miraculous and protective branch.

A Warning Before the Journey

Before Aeneas undertakes this journey, there is a final warning. It is a somber one. Misenus, one of Aeneas's companions, has followed his arrogance and foolishly challenged a sea god, Triton, to a musical contest. Triton becomes so incensed by this that he drowns Misenus. The Sibyl warns Aeneas that the presence of Misenus's body, unburied, unmourned, is defiling the entire Trojan fleet. He must be buried properly.

Clearly, on an overt level, the Sibyl is talking about ritual purity, of which many ancient cultures had some form. But on a deeper level, it is the arrogance and foolhardiness which Misenus represented which must be buried. Misenus, a war bard who could inspire warriors to battle, misused his gift for ego purposes. This Aeneas cannot do if his follower are to survive, if the Trojan people is ultimately to be transformed into the Latin and then the Roman people. As Murray Stein points out in *In Midlife*, using the example of the burial of Hector at the end of *The Iliad*, for transformation to occur, to emerge from liminality, there are aspects of the old which must be buried with honor and mourned, and from which one must separate in order to enter into the new time.

[\[46\]](#)

This is the point at which Aeneas stands. The burial of Misenus is, in its way, also a burial of the foolish and arrogant false warrior spirit which would lead Aeneas into a fruitless and meaningless death. His life belongs to the divine and to his destiny. He cannot go haring off into battle, following an outworn way of life. The entire first half of *The Aeneid* is about Aeneas's transformation in this regard, and this is its culminating point. The gift of the golden bough to the Sybil, an act of humility, opens the door to a humble release of a way of life that must be let go of before Aeneas can pass out of the liminal phase into incorporation, into a return to both his people and to fulfilling his destiny on this earth.

The journey to “the underworld” can take many forms. Of utmost importance, however, is the distinction between “diving” and “falling,” between journeying with a guide like the Sibyl and a protection like the golden bough - or without. The shadow side of this kind of *katabasis* is what Neumann calls “the negative transformative character” of the Great Mother, [\[47\]](#) which may involve substance abuse, psychosis, nontransformative financial poverty, and ultimately spiritual or physical death. That is falling. The “diving” aspect may be found in religious or spiritual practices, as well as in the Jungian meditative practice of active imagination, a practice in which the ego stands its ground while it engages in a transformative dialogue (*Auseinandersetzung*) with non-ego contents of the unconscious.

Earlier in the *Aeneid*, in Book 4, Vergil compares Aeneid to an oak:

But like a strong oak tree, mighty with the hardwood of years,
Whom the Alpine North winds, with their blowing here and there
Contend amongst themselves to uproot: a creaking comes, and the high
Leafy branches confuse the earth as the trunk is harshly shaken.
But the trunk itself grips firmly to the rocks, and however far into
the upper air
It reaches with its crown, that far too it reaches with its roots into
the depths. [\[48\]](#)

...

His mind remains unmoved.

“Through various disasters, through so many life and death situations”, [\[49\]](#) Aeneas has – despite doubts, difficulties, and at some points despair – remained steadfast. Like the oak, though he has been shaken by all the terrible things he and his companions have experienced, along with the revelations of Mercury, the message of Jupiter, and Dido's vehement emotional reactions, he has come through. A lot of leaves have fallen to the ground. But the trunk and the roots have “gripped the rocks” and stood firm. Like the oak, Aeneas has, time and again, been literally shaken to his roots. But, also like the oak, Aeneas holds firmly to his sense of divinely guided purpose. That, and his deep roots, get him through.

So too in the Christian context there is also this sense of rocklike firmness and rootedness. Saint Paul speaks of the rock which Moses struck with his staff in the desert, which miraculously brought forth water. “And that Rock is Christ.” Wherever that Rock is, however that Rock is expressed or understood, it is an individual's connection with his or her own divine purpose, “bestowed mission”, true path.

True home is part of true path. And there are helpers for the founding of true home – helpers hinted at in the Aeneid. One of the most powerful of those helpers is Vesta, the ancient Roman goddess of hearth and home.

and ultimately life.^[50] When this archetypal energy touches an individual, home and life become at risk.

But this is only half of the story. In Jungian theory, most archetypes have two poles, often understood as positive and negative. The opposite pole to the Terrible Mother is the Good Mother, the nourishing mother, who provides food, warmth, shelter, and loving care - in short, the basic necessities of life on this earth, and earth-connectedness. Specifically, as described above, there are often difficulties for abuse survivors in earth-connectedness, in connecting with this positive energy. There are many examples in the mythologies and religions of both the ancient and modern worlds as to how this energy is symbolized, understood, addressed, and worshipped. In this chapter we will be focusing on the ancient Roman goddess Vesta.

Vesta was the goddess of the hearth and home, both of the individual and the city of Rome as a whole. Her central symbol was the hearth. In her temple was the storehouse of those things most sacred to Rome. Legendarily they included the statue of Athena which, according to very ancient Roman tradition, Aeneas had brought from the burning ruins of Troy.^[51] Her storehouse also contained the basic necessity of life – food - symbolized as the grain used in sacrificial offerings to Vesta.

Warde Fowler, a classicist and scholar of ancient Roman religion in the late 19th and early 20th century, describes three central aspects of Vesta's worship: the sacred fire; purification; and food.^[52]

The Sacred Fire

How did the ancient Romans view Vesta? Fowler tells us that her worship was kept pure through the centuries, and was “of immemorial antiquity.”^[53] Ovid, writing in the late first century B.C., when the worship of Vesta among the ancient Romans was already centuries old, says of Vesta: “And you - understand Vesta as nothing other than the living flame.”^[54] Ovid describes how he had been “foolish” (stultus) and had at first thought that Vesta was the statues he had seen of her. But, he says, he came to realize that she was, in fact, not corporeal at all: her essence was the essence of the flame. It seems that Vesta, like many other forms of the Divine, could perhaps be symbolized, but never fully expressed, by any material form.

By contrast, Volcanus, the Roman smith god, was seen as wielding a powerful flame that could be extremely destructive as well. Volcanus as smith is creative, but his shadow side is utter ruin. An example of that is a dream I had during the experiences described in Chapter 4, when I was confronted with extreme deconstructionist energy in a divinity school context. The day before a new phase of the curriculum began, I dreamed that a crazed man who enjoyed burning things down for the sake of sheer destructiveness was burning down the apartment building I had lived in for many years – the long-time home I eventually lost, as described in Chapter 1. I shouted, horrified, “What are you doing?” He laughed and said: “Watch it burn!” The apartment managers did nothing. I instantly knew that this referred to the class I was in but I was stuck there for another month ... and, indeed, metaphorically, I watched it burn and be utterly ruined. I was helpless to prevent it. This self-professedly radical divinity school allowed no input by students that could possibly have prevented this extremely destructive energy from ruining the spirituality of an untold number of future ministers and other spiritual leaders. That is Volcanus energy: destroying for destruction’s sake, with no thought of, or concern for, rebuilding.

This quality of Volcanus – of flames running wild – was a two-edged sword. In a state of war it could be a protection for Rome. But this dangerous form of protection, though honored in the form of the temple of Volcanus, was housed outside of the city. This was also true of the temple of Mars, for much the same reasons, as we will see in the following chapter. By contrast, Vesta was within the city, deep within - indeed at its very center.

There were several times a year when Vesta was especially worshipped. The Roman year began on March 1, and it was then that the sacred fire of Vesta was renewed on a yearly basis. The fire could not be lit from another fire; it had to be lit as a brand-new fire from a “lucky tree” (*arbor felix*) by friction (essentially rubbing two sticks together). It was also on March 1, as Ovid relates, that the temple of Vesta “gleamed with new foliage.” If the fire went out at any other time, it was considered a terrible disaster and a catastrophic omen. For instance, in the third century B.C. the Vestal flame went out during the Second Punic War, at a time when Rome was fighting against Hannibal and Carthage for its very life and was nearly destroyed. The Romans took this omen extremely seriously, and solemnly relit the fire with all the appropriate ceremonies. With divine help, Rome came through and survived this extreme danger.

It can happen in an individual's life that the central flame, the dream or vision that gives “fire” and passion and which sustains life, goes out. Life becomes bleak and meaningless. Then, like the Vestals, it is necessary to relight it from its primordial connection with earth energy and tree energy, from an *arbor felix*, a “lucky tree.” This energy can insure a safe return - rather than a destructive fiery conflagration - to the foundation of one's passion and joy - from the root of one's being. In order to bring one's passion to life, the fire of Vesta, not the fire of Vulcanus, is needed. Vesta provides the warmth of a physical and spiritual true home from which one can safely go out into the world and bring one's passion to life.

The temple of Vesta was the very center of the city of Rome, which was in turn the center of the Roman Republic and later the Roman Empire. The ancient Roman worship of Vesta was focused on placing God/Goddess at the center of both individual and communal life. As Joseph Campbell points out in *An Open Life*, ^[55] in religious cultures, such as those of the Christian Middle Ages, the religious edifice - in that case, the cathedral - is at the center of the city. It is only when faith is lost as the compass of a culture that it is replaced - in the case of modern Western culture, by commercial buildings. This is yet another post-Reformation development in Western culture, where money/work/commercialism substitutes for God. A modern business word sums it up: “commodifying”, unashamedly and purposely turning anyone or anything into an object for the sake of sale and profit. Money and trade have been a necessary part of Western culture for millennia, but when they become the center, the master instead of the servant, God vanishes: “You cannot serve both God and

money.”

Vesta's flame is ultimately a primordial flame, not created by man.

Some scholars derive Vesta's name from “vas,” “vessel.” An alchemical writing quoted by Jung notes that the alchemical vas needs to be round, after the shape of the heavens – a cosmic archetypal energy of ordering and containing.^[56] So, too, Vesta’s temple was round. And – also like the alchemical process of transformation, which requires a healing flame in order to occur - Vesta's energy is that of the archetypal healing and nurturing fire, the hearth and home.

Purification

A festival of central importance for the worship of Vesta was the Vestalia, beginning on June 9. The festival was both preceded and followed by several days of cleaning the temple. This weeklong period culminated in the sweeping and final cleansing of the temple on June 15. The ancient Roman calendar upon which Fowler bases many of his observations describes that day as the day “quando stercum delata fas,” “when it is proper to dispose of the animal droppings.”^[57] As Fowler points out, this saying must go back to extremely ancient times, when the Romans, like the very ancient Hebrews and proto-Hebrews, were still nomadic herdsmen and the temple of Vesta (again like the ancient Hebrew tabernacle, similarly a shrine carried by nomadic tribesmen) was a moveable tent. According to Ovid, the sweepings from the temple of Vesta (purgamina Vestae) were gathered and then cast into the Tiber.^[58]

This period of cleansing and preparation, related to the sacred flame, the goddess of hearth and home, was also related to food. As Frazer (quoted by Fowler) notes of Native American practices, there was a thorough cleansing before the first fruits of the harvest were brought in and enjoyed.^[59] Although the Vestalia were not, strictly speaking, a harvest festival - it was too early in the year for that - they too had this quality of cleansing in

preparation for receiving the bounty of the earth. Vesta herself is very much an earth-connected goddess: “earth and hearth indicate her dwelling place.”^[60]

Food

Vesta was also a goddess deeply connected with food. The storeroom of the temple of Vesta was divided into two parts. The inner part, which constituted the innermost part of the temple, traditionally was believed to contain the most precious spiritual treasures of the Roman people, such as the statue of Pallas Athena, the Palladium, which Aeneas had, according to legend, brought with him from the ruins of Troy. It was also believed that Aeneas had brought with him the household gods of Troy, the energies for the re-founding of true home. The outer part of the storeroom contained the provisions for sacrifices to Vesta, such as the special sacrificial salted grain (*mola salsa*)^[61]. Likewise, in individual Roman houses, the storeroom held the food provisions for the family. It could thus literally make the difference between life and death.

As Varro, an ancient Roman scholar (quoted by Fowler) describes it, the Vestals prepared the food offerings for Vesta in a very basic way, taking stalks of grain and roasting, pounding, and grinding them into a kind of coarse flour, which was then salted with “heated salt and hard salt.” The Vestals then made cakes of this coarse flour, which were offered at the Lupercalia (in February), the Vestalia (in June), and the Ides of September.^[62]

Fowler, basing himself on Ovid's *Fasti*, also notes that food offerings were brought to Vesta on “plain, unadorned plates” (Ovid has “pura patella” - “a simple dish.”). The simplicity of her worship not only harkens back to the earliest days of Rome. It also connects her worshippers with food, a necessity for life and a gift of the Good Mother, in the clearest and most basic way.

Edward Edinger, in his introduction to Jungian alchemy, *Anatomy of the Psyche*, notes that the alchemical operation of *coagulatio* – “solidifying” – is very connected to food and is often symbolized in dreams by

eating. ^[63] Eating is a sacred act that connects us to the earth. Sometimes dreams are even more explicit and symbolize this sacred connection in a given religious or spiritual context – for instance, by an individual’s receiving the Christian sacrament of Communion, a primary form of a sacred connection of the spiritual with the material, of heaven with earth. This too was part of the energy of Vesta and Her connection with food.

The Storeroom

The storeroom in the temple of Vesta was apparently divided into two different sections, an outer section and an inner section. In the outer section were kept all the materials and implements needed for sacrifices. This part of the storeroom was opened to the women of Rome at the beginning of the Vestalia (June 9) and left open until the day when the temple of Vesta received its final major cleansing of the year (June 15). Also, the Roman high priest (*pontifex maximus*) had access there. He was the only man allowed into the storeroom at all, and even he could go only into the outer part of the storeroom. [\[64\]](#)

The inner part of the storeroom was considered the holiest part of the temple of Vesta. Into it were allowed only the Vestals, and perhaps only the head Vestal. This innermost, most sacred part of the storeroom contained the most sacred objects of Rome. The secret of what these objects were was kept so well that after over two thousand years the only thing known about them is that one of them was thought to be the Palladium, the statue of Pallas Athena that Aeneas had brought from the burning ruins of Troy along with the *penates*, the household gods of Troy. In fact, during post-Augustan times, the tradition grew that Vesta herself had come from Troy.

Protecting the Storeroom: Leaving the Torturers' System

Psychologically understood, this inner storehouse is one's energy home, the center of the personality – in Jungian terms, like Vesta's flame, symbol and image of the Self. This protected inner room where the most sacred memories, images, words, memories of a personality are

“stored” has great significance, particularly for abuse survivors. Judith Herman, in *Trauma and Recovery*,

discusses how abusers, whether family, business, academic, ecclesiastical, governmental, or any other sort, first try to destroy any connection that the victim/ survivor has to what is precious to him or her. This chilling activity is meant to destroy the victim as a unique personality, as a child of Goddess/God, and to make him/her into a robot or slave to do the abuser's bidding. [\[66\]](#)

Yet, just as the Hebrew prophets foretold how a “remnant” could remain after utter destruction, symbolically, so too a remnant, or sometimes the entire storeroom, can remain intact. This possibility is beautifully and movingly illustrated in Steve Miller's and Sharon Lee's science fiction novel, *Carpe Diem*. [\[67\]](#)

In the preceding novel in the series, *Agent of Change*, Miri Robertson, a mercenary soldier from a dirt-poor background, and Val Con yos Phelium, a wealthy aristocrat from the highest levels of his culture who has become a Scout and then an “agent of change” – brainwashed into a cold, unfeeling assassin who kills on command for the “Department of the Interior” – become, in the most unlikely way possible, partners and later lifemates.

In *Carpe Diem*, a major theme is Val Con's reconstitution of his true self. In *Agent of Change*, by intensively returning to l'Apeleka, a body/mind/spirit practice (similar to martial arts kata) which he has learned from his nonhuman brothers the turtles, beings from a distant planet, but then neglected for many years, Val Con starts the process of healing. However, in *Carpe Diem*, in a terrible life-threatening crisis, he is forced to reactivate the assassin's indoctrination in order to save his life and, he believes, Miri's life as well (though it turns out that Miri is quite capable of defending herself against several armed assailants). He feels trapped and cannot find his way back to wholeness. He abandons Miri and essentially waits to die.

But Miri seeks him out. Val Con in turn has taught her how to find her way to her “inner room.” Like Vesta's storeroom, it contains what is most precious to her. And now, in turn, she offers Val Con the possibility of returning to his inner room, promising to defend him if the journey there becomes perilous.

Val Con has lost all hope that his inner room even still exists. He is convinced that the torturers and indoctrinators of the Department of the Interior destroyed it in the process of making him into their agent of change. He despairs of ever becoming free of their indoctrination. But after Miri leads him down the inner staircase that precedes finding one's room, Val Con finds the door, and hesitates for a long moment before he tries to open it.

There is a moment of silence. Then Val Con exclaims to Miri - "he nearly sang the words" - "Miri, it's still here! Still whole! They never got inside!"^[68]

Val Con's hesitation is understandable. To find the innermost part of one's self shattered would have been torture beyond belief, and perhaps beyond bearing. But it is still whole. Val Con is able to seek wholeness in his room, to "dance l'Apeleka" again, and to find a restoration of his true personality.

Later, when one of the torturers catches up with him and forces him through a programmed catechism, Val Con's mouth is forced to answer with the lies he was taught. But his body describes a l'Apeleka move, and he is able to break free.

Here is that passage, in Miller's and Lee's powerful writing:

"When the commander calls you to duty," the man demanded, the High Tongue knelling like a death-bell, "what do you say?"

Val Con's body twisted silently in the dance; he came to a point of fulcrum and smiled peacefully upon his questioner. "Carpe diem."

The words were like bright sun, burning away the fog. In the instant of answering, he recognized the l'Apeleka dance named "Accepting the Lance"; recalled that the one giving ground before him was an enemy; recalled that there had been another answer to the last question, an answer that had made no sense. Miri had given him the proper answer - the true answer - and he had danced it into place in

Hakan's barn. [\[69\]](#)

The “answers” of the torturers never make sense. They are always designed to destroy the personality and to create slaves. That is why the torturer's voice sounds like a death bell. To follow that voice is to follow the forces of death, to die deep in the soul. Twentieth century Jewish philosopher Martin Buber describes this as “die daemonische Scheinfrage” – “the demonic seeming-question” which – actually a statement rather than a question – declares: “Von da aus, wo du hingeraten bist, fuehrt kein Weg weiter” – “from out of there, where you have ended up, no way leads further.” The torturers create a reality, a “video game”, which is a deceptive, entrapping “reality” of death from which there is no way out. Rebooting the system doesn’t work. The only thing that works, the only path of salvation, is to leave the torturers’ universe, the torturers’ system, entirely and forever.

Val Con was right in perceiving the questioner's voice as a death knell. Staying in the torturers’ system would have killed him. To have continued the catechism, to have answered the questioner in the way *he* wanted, would have meant Val Con's death, spiritually and psychologically if not physically. So Val Con left the torturers’ system and found his way to freedom.

The destroyers of personality come in many forms. Sometimes they are very obvious. In Nazi Germany, by the mid-1930s, there was an “official” Catholic Church and an “official” Lutheran church. The number of Christians or other religions outside of these two churches was, at that time in Germany, miniscule; and of course Jews were being persecuted and dispossessed. Most Germans – clergy people and lay people both – toed the line. But a very small minority within the Lutheran church held a meeting called the Synod of Barmen and formed what they called “The Confessing Church” – “confessing” here in the sense of affirming the ultimate authority of Divine over oppressive totalitarian secular authorities that could, and in many instances did, cost them their lives.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one such martyr, a Protestant minister who had founded a seminary for the Confessing Church, then fled to England. Feeling called to return to Germany from safety in England, he was seized by the Nazis and sent to a concentration camp, where he was hanged – even more tragically, just a few weeks before the end of the war.

Regarding that terrible time, Hans Kueng, a German Catholic theologian, wrote the following:

Anyone in Germany under the National Socialist regime who confessed publicly that there was still as formerly only one authoritative “leader” [German “Fuehrer”] in the Church could be understood - if not by the Catholic or Lutheran episcopate, then at any rate by Karl Barth, the “Confessing Church,” and the Synod of Barmen - just as well as those Christians who almost two thousand years earlier confessed before the Roman tribunals that “Jesus is Lord.” Such confessions expressed in living as well as in words have to be paid for - often dearly - not only in times of martyrdom, but also in times when Christianity is prospering. We have to pay for it whenever we invoke Christ and refuse to worship the idols of the time - and there are many of them. [\[70\]](#)

Kueng, a Christian theologian, symbolizes the commitment to the truth of one's being as confessing “Jesus is Lord.” But there are many forms of following the truth, all equally valid. Indeed, some modern liberal Protestant congregations pray to “Jesus of many names,” many forms. The names may differ; the commitment is absolute.

Sometimes the oppression, and the forms that it takes, are not obvious. And sometimes the healing, saving responses to physical, psychological, and spiritual torturers are not so obvious either. But the basis remains the same: going to one's inner room – symbolized in ancient Roman religion by Vesta's storehouse - and drawing strength from the sacredness and quiet there; doing whatever body/ mind/spirit practices - prayer, meditation, hiking, music, dance, martial arts, study, food - enable one to reconnect with, and to come from, one's center - and answering from that center, answering with an affirmation of what is the truest and most sacred form of divinity in one's life. For first century Christians, and the Christians of the Confessing Church, it was to affirm, “Jesus is Lord,” even when that affirmation cost them their lives; or, as Kueng points out, even in more religious tolerant climates, living in a radically different way.

Each individual must find the way to the Divine in his or her own way. There are no set answers.

But the starting point is always the center of the individual – again, the “inner room.” Jesus always saw his disciples as individuals, not as cookie-cutter cookies and certainly not as plug-in components. This is also

symbolized, as Jung notes, by Gnostic interpretations of the water of the Euphrates, one of the four sacred rivers mentioned in the Old Testament. It gives to each individual exactly what he or she needs to most become himself or herself in truth. ^[71]

The Founding of a Roman City

The worship of Vesta was also central to the founding of Roman cities. In the chapter on Romulus, the entire city founding ritual will be described more fully. What is of special interest in the context of Vesta worship is the following verse from Ovid's *Fasti*: “Et novus accenso fungitur igne focus.” “And, once the fire had been kindled, the new hearth fulfilled its function.” ^[72] ®

The “new hearth” is the spiritual energy center of the new city. It represents, as we have seen, the basic spiritual and physical energies required for life. In ancient Roman civilization, no city and no temple could be complete without the presence of a hearth. Similarly, no created life can be complete without the presence of its inner fire - its passion, its deepest calling, its true path. It is interesting to note that in a Christian context, the Holy Spirit is often symbolized by a healing and teaching fire, bestowing spiritual gifts. This is how the Holy Spirit came to the very earliest worshippers at Pentecost (Acts 2).

The October Horse

Vesta also had a deep connection with the ceremony of the October horse. This somewhat mysterious horse sacrifice, held on the Ides of October (October 15), involved, among other aspects, cutting off the tail of the horse. A runner was then sent, running as fast as he could, to the Regia, the ancient royal palace next to the temple of Vesta, where the still-fresh blood was dripped on the hearth. According to some traditions, the tail and its blood were kept dried in the storeroom of Vesta until the spring, when they were used in another fertility ritual.

What is the connection between Vesta and Mars? As we have seen, Vesta represents the energies of hearth and

home, including the innermost precious things of family or city - physical and spiritual food. Mars, the archetypal warrior, is the protector of Vesta's energy and of the city as a whole. His energy will be considered in more detail in the following chapter.

Both fire energy and war energy can get out of control. Volcanus was the Roman representation of uncontrolled, destructive, deadly fire energy on the rampage, destroying everyone and everything in its path. (He also had a more benign side as the smith-god, crafting beautiful works). Similarly, the ancient Romans sometimes referred to Mars as caecus, “blind.”

Like other warrior gods and warrior figures, Mars was capable of what centuries later Germanic sources called “berserkerang” - the energy of warriors and warrior gods who went into an altered state of consciousness and killed everyone in their path. Adam of Bremen, a medieval chronicler, describing the Germanic god Wotan (Odin), said simply, “Wotan, id est furor” - “Wotan means 'rage.'” In Roman mythology, Horatius, filled with this killing rage which didn't discriminate, killed his sister on his arrival home from war. In modern times, there are war veterans, of official or unofficial wars, who “snap” and then experience such a killing rage.

The temple of Volcanus, like that of Mars, the protector of the city, was outside of the city of Rome proper, that is, outside of the walls. Like Mars, the powerful energies of Volcanus could protect in time of war, to defend against life-destroying enemies. But, uncontrolled, treated without the respect deserved, this fire could also, quite simply, destroy. Thus, this kind of fire could never be brought within the walls.

The Romans, even though - or perhaps because - in general they were an orderly people, understood and had paradoxical outlets for this battle rage. They were also familiar with this archetype of destructive fire. It may seem far from Vesta to consider these energies. “But understand - Vesta is fire.” Vesta's fire could warm and heal. Volcanus's fire could destroy and kill. Mars, the protector of Vesta, of hearth and home, had to be able to kill in protection of the city, but his killing, and the killing of those who followed him, could get out of hand. In the following chapter, we will consider Mars, along with some manifestations of berserkerang, which in their way served as protectors of the peace, safety, and orderliness represented by Vesta and the archetype of home.

The sacred flame of Vesta represented home and hearth, and also food. Both private Roman homes and the temple of Vesta had the special storeroom for food and also other precious life-sustaining things. As Warde Fowler notes:

On the state of its contents the family depended for its comfort and prosperity, and from the very outset it must have had a kind of sacred character. The close connection of Vesta and her ministrants with the simple materials and processes of the house and the farm is thus quite plain; and we may trace it in every rite in which they took part. [\[73\]](#)

The sacred fire of Vesta was a fire very much connected with simple and utterly essential earthly needs. Its sacrality did not divorce it from, but connected it with, the earth. For the Romans, Vesta represented stability and earth-connectedness. Vesta's temple was inherently sacred, sacred as the earth is sacred. As Native American wisdom speaks of all creatures on this earth as “all my relations,” so too Vesta's consecratedness comes from the fact that the earth is sacred, as are all who dwell upon it, or with Her.

To connect with Vesta is to connect with a deep archetypal energy of hearth and home, of safety, of nurture, of warmth and well-being. For those who have been deprived of these things at a very early time, it's important to remember that, though one's earthly parents mediate - or fail to mediate - the archetypal energy of home, that energy itself can never be destroyed by any human intervention, however destructive and terrible. The archetypal energy of hearth and home can be (re)connected to by connecting to the energy of Vesta, her sacred observances, her history, and her myths.

Yet it is not enough to honor the sacredness of home in one's heart, though that is essential. It is also absolutely necessary to turn to an outer energy of protection, to protect the sacred hearth and home. In ancient Rome, that energy was embodied in, and symbolized as, Mars. It is to his worship and energy that we now turn.

Chapter 6 - Mars, the Protector of Home

We have seen in the previous chapter how the most precious and most sacred objects of Rome were kept in the innermost part of the storeroom of Vesta in the temple of Vesta. Like home and hearth, those sacred objects need protection. In ancient Roman mythology and religion, it is the god Mars who is the protector of the city of Rome, and, symbolically, of the most precious aspects of home. For this reason, his temple was located outside of the city boundaries, so that he could sense a threat coming and defend against it before it reached the city.

In one of the oldest mentions of Mars – considered ancient even in the time of classical Rome, in the first century B.C. - preserved, in a carmen Arvale, or song of the priests who concerned themselves with cultivated land, Mars is prayed to, or beseeched, as follows:

Don't let plague or ruin come in
Be satiated, savage Mars - leap over (or upon) the threshold and
stand guard
... Triumph triumph triumph triumph triumph triumph!

Mars is the energy who stands guard against the incursions of the enemy, however understood, physical or spiritual, who seeks to destroy sacred home. He protects the integrity and sanctity of city and home.

The Salii

The Romans, like other ancient peoples, were largely seasonal in their activities throughout a long period of their history and prehistory. Mars, too, was connected with seasonal energy. The season of war for the Romans was held to last from March - the month of Mars, and originally the first month in the ancient Roman calendar - through October.

There were special priests, consecrated to Mars, who performed special ceremonies both to open this season of warfare and to close it. They were called the Salii, the “leapers” or “dancers.”

According to ancient Roman tradition, a sacred shield fell from the skies in the time of Numa, the first Roman king to succeed Romulus. A blacksmith then duplicated this sacred shield eleven times, so that by historical times there were twelve identical shields. The Salii carried these shields in their activities, leaping and striking them with staves or sticks. They were active throughout the month of March, to open the season of warfare, and then again in October, to close it. It's important to note that the energy of the Salii focused on shields and staves, both *protective* arms.

The activities of the Salii in their physical worship and honoring of the god are generally referred to as “dances.” But it is likely that this description was written by scholars who were unfamiliar with the martial arts. In many, if not most, martial arts, there is an activity known generally by its Japanese term of “kata.”

Kata are coordinated movements intended to practice the art. Some kata may indeed resemble dancing. But their meaning and significance goes far beyond this. Kata have been described as a form of body/mind/spirit balancing and prayer. They can certainly be seen as training dances or movements, but they have – when practiced with focus and concentration – both a fierce yet controlled warrior spirit as well as a profound spiritual aspect. It is likely that the “dances” of the Salii were likewise a form of moving prayers, intended to offer the work of their body/mind/spirit to the warrior god, Mars.

There is an additional aspect of kata. The practice of the many aspects of martial arts, and particularly of kata, is ideally performed on the level of “shinken shobu” - mortal combat. This does not usually mean engaging in mortal combat physically – though some martial arts practitioners are police officers or military people, for whom this is indeed a literal reality - but rather bringing to the practice of kata the same seriousness, utter concentration, and devotion which would be necessary to bring to mortal combat. The utmost gravity of the practice points toward a level and intensity of focus and commitment that is the same as that achieved in life and death battle, the origin of the arts. It is likely that this level of total commitment was also present in the “moving prayers” of the Salii as

they honored their god Mars, the god to whose service they had been especially consecrated.

The Salii, as mentioned above, “danced” during March, to open the season of warfare, and then again in October, to close that season. The festival of the closing of the season of warfare was called the Armilustrum, “the purifying of arms.” It came on October 19, closely following the sacrifice of the October Horse, which came on October 15.

The Salii “danced” with shields, staves, and sword belts. Though the sword, an offensive weapon, was in readiness, it was not part of the dance. The shields and staves, which are both defensive weapons, were the weapons used in the dance. The Salii used the staves to strike the shields, probably in rhythm with the music and their songs, which were very ancient. By way of comparison, the Japanese short staff, or jo, was used defensively on the battlefield starting in the time of the Samurai (around the seventeenth century A.D.) to protect against sword attacks. It too was and is a sacred weapon, having been revealed, according to tradition, to the founder of the way of the stick, Master Gonnosuke, as he sought through prayer and meditation a form of defense against the sword. It seems likely that the Salii, in their dance, were similarly connected with an energy of defense and protection. Mars was the god of protection for the Romans, and was deeply concerned with warding off any evils, “visible or invisible,” from his people.

We have considered the ritual of the October horse from the side of the rituals of Vesta. Let us now consider it from the side of Mars, the warrior and protector god.

The October Horse Ceremony in the Service of Mars

From the point of view of those consecrated to and in the service of Mars, the festival of the October Horse represented the living connection of the protector god and his energies with the energies of the female goddess of home and hearth, Vesta. In the ceremony, to recapitulate, the tail of the October horse, still dripping blood,

was carried as swiftly as possible to (it is not clear) either the hearth of the *aedes Vesta* next to the Regia - the old palace of the Roman kings, which in the time of the Republic (around 500 B.C. onwards) became the religious center of the city, and the dwelling place of the rex sacrorum, the “king” of the sacred things - or to the hearth of the Regia itself.

The urgency of this task points to the urgency of this connection. Without Mars the protector, the sacred energies of the hearth and the inmost, most sacred places of Rome, which were discussed in the Vesta chapter, could not be safe. The warlike energy of Mars is absolutely necessary to assure and secure the safety and protection of these sacred territories and aspects of home.

There is another aspect to the Regia as well. The energies of Jupiter, the god of kingship and the ordering principle are deeply involved in the founding of Rome, as will be further described in the next chapter. Likewise, we will there consider the place of Mars in the energies and lineage of Rome. The Regia also contained the energies of Mars (through this ceremony and others) and those of Quirinus, the god of material abundance, plenty, and prosperity. He was seen in Roman tradition also as the peaceful side of Mars.

The entire male population of Rome was basically called to this service. Ancient Roman men, from the age of 16, when they assumed the toga virilis, the “manly toga” which proclaimed that they were no longer children but had taken on manhood, up to age 60 and sometimes beyond, were considered subject to military service. Thus, Rome was always either in a state of war or of a “watchful peace.” The general in command of the Roman army, before going out to war, performed a very simple ceremony. He entered the temple of Mars, lifted the spear symbolizing Mars, shook it, and said, “Mars, vigila!” - “Mars, keep watch!” This watchfulness of Mars was necessary not only in war, but in times of peace, to assure the safety of Rome's inhabitants, its structures, and its sacred objects, kept hidden away and protected in the storeroom of Vesta.

These sacred objects were related to an energy of prosperity and abundance. And so when an individual or a state is touched by the energy of this archetype of abundance, he or she prospers.

In the Regia are joined all three functions: kingship, warrior energy, and material prosperity. They are all mutually necessary. We will consider the energies of kingship in more detail in the next chapter. Here it is clear that the

energies of the warrior are absolutely necessary for the protection of the sacred in all its forms.

The warrior must not tarry. When called the protection of the sacred, to connect this protecting energy with the energies of hearth and home, and the sacred people and objects which they contain, he or she must hasten to this calling as quickly as possible. Sometimes this involves entering into altered states of consciousness which modern warriors may also experience (though the cultural recognition of them may be nonexistent). The ancient Romans knew of “furor”, battle rage. Similarly, the ancient Celts also had this concept. It also existed significantly among the ancient Germanic tribes. In all of these settings, battle rage had a significant, culturally recognized, and honored place. And – extremely important – there were cultural vessels and ceremonies for both entering into and exiting these states, so that – as in the Roman Republic, where all soldiers were citizens soldiers – the warrior could safely re-enter and resume civilian life.

Mars and Berserkergang

Berserkergang is the Scandinavian word for battle rage. The European chronicler Adam of Bremen, writing in the sixth century A.D., noted that “Wotan, id est furor” - “Wotan [also known as Odin in Scandinavia and Woden among the Anglo-Saxons], that is rage.” In the ancient Roman context, “Mars saevit” - “Mars is in battle rage” - is an equivalent.

Within the context of the shared Indo-European heritage, there are many instances of battle rage. The Irish hero Cuchulain had to be immersed in three successive tubs of cold water before his battle rage cooled. The Celtic war chief Kai (also known as Kei or Kay) went into a state of battle rage to such an extent that he could evaporate raindrops on his body. Tacitus, an ancient Roman historian, notes that the German warriors before a battle induced battle rage by singing

A special song called the *barditum* and rhythmically chanting into their shields. ^[74] This established a battle rage rhythm.

There is a quite a lot written on how warriors got into berserkergang, or battle rage. But there is far less on how they got out of it and returned to normal life within their community. The berserkers are said to have fallen into a deep sleep after which they emerged free of berserkergang. However, there are hints of the return to peace. In ancient writings, the Celtic Druids are described as being able to stop warring armies in their tracks and bring about peace through some sort of energy work involving chanting.

Similarly, the ancient teachings of Pythagoras – a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher of the sixth century B.C. - which focused on the harmony-producing connections between mathematics, music, and astronomy are said to have contained rhythms that restored harmony and peace by connecting to the basic ordering energies of the universe.

The entry into berserkergang certainly involves a shift in rhythm. The entry into berserkergang is an entry into an altered state. In these ancient cultures, it was considered to be a sacred state. But it was a sacred state bringing extreme dangers with it if prolonged past the battlefield. A rite de sortie – a ritual of exiting – is absolutely necessary in order to safely exit from the altered state of battle rage or berserkergang. The ancient Romans were very aware of this. In October, when the season of warfare ended in ancient Rome, the ceremony of the *tigillum sororium*, the “sisterly beam of wood,” took place. The flamines - the priests of Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus - rode in a covered carriage with their hands wrapped in white cloth to a beam of wood. This was a powerful reminder of the wooden beam under which the legendary Horatius was said to pass for ritual purification after he returned from war in a state of battle rage and was greeted by his sister. Horatius did not recognize her and killed her. The Romans remembered this terrible event in order to exit safely from *berserkergang*, which is – even, or especially, when it is not culturally recognized - an extremely intense warrior energy that needs to be set aside upon re-entry into civilian life, until it next emerges to protect individuals and the state.

Similarly, the Salii, with their sacred shields and staves, with their warrior “dances” or *kata*, opened the season of war in March. Conversely, in October, there is the *armilustrum*, the purifying of the weapons when they are returned to storage to await the following March. This represents an exiting from the warrior/berserkergang state, and was also accompanied by the dances of the Salii. This is perhaps similar to indigenous tribes that have a rite

of re-entry so that returning warriors, still in a residual state of battle rage, can be safely re-integrated into the civilian culture. In a less dramatic way, the act of bowing in and out of the dojo in martial arts – and also bowing in and out of one's own individual practice – provides a simple, quiet ritual of entering and ritual of exiting from the most intense forms of warrior energy.

In addition, as described above, the ancient Roman ceremony of the October Horse provided a ritual that subordinated the warrior energy into the service of home and hearth, placing it into a position of true service to the whole. It was time to return from the battlefield. The wars were done, at least for the given year. The warrior needed to return home and submit to the demands of the home - not in a destructive way, but simply to shift his energy and focus. Perhaps the sacrifice of the October horse and the dripping of the blood on the hearth – the place of Vesta, goddess of home - also represents this shift of emphasis.

But the ceremony of the October Horse also symbolizes the readiness and the alacrity with which the warrior, when called upon, must take up again the protection of the city, the family, the home, and its sacred people and objects. To shift fully into the warrior state of being is not a decision taken lightly. But ancient Rome understood very well that a “watchful peace,” manned by civilians who at any moment could be called upon to be soldiers, required a centered stance of vigilance, and is the only way to maintain true peace - a peace that ensures the protection of the sacred, the protection of home.

Chapter 7 - Romulus and the Sacred Circle of Home

The story of the founding of Rome is the story of how a country and a city were founded, against all odds. As we saw in the chapter on the Aeneid, Aeneas, once a great warrior, now a homeless wanderer, comes from Troy to Italy to found the nation which eventually becomes the Roman Empire. Romulus, a descendant of Aeneas, abandoned as a newborn to die by an evil king who has usurped the kingship, miraculously survives, is able to reclaim the kingship, and founds the city of Rome.

Romulus and Mars

In the previous chapter, we saw how absolutely essential protector energy is – expressed in ancient Roman religion and mythology by Mars - to the safety of the physical and spiritual sacredness of home. Romulus was legendarily held to be a son of Mars. Vergil, in *The Aeneid*, speaks of how Romulus “will build the Mars-connected walls” (1,275) and also speaks of Romulus himself as “Mars-connected” (Mavortius) (6,777). Similarly, in his description of Aeneas’ shield, on which the smith-god Volcanus has engraved scenes from Rome’s history, the infant Romulus is found in “a green cave sacred to Mars”. Thus Mars’ warrior energy of protectiveness is found at the very root of ancient Roman history.

Romulus's Origins

The story told of Romulus's origins in Livy – a Roman historian writing in the first century B.C. , and relying on sources far more ancient, which have since been lost - had apparently, even then, been ancient Roman tradition for a very long time. It was taken up in later works as well. According to Livy, Aemilius, an early king of Rome, had agreed to share the kingship by alternating years of rule with his brother Numitor. But instead of this Aemilius murdered Numitor. He made Numitor's daughter, Rhea Silvia, a Vestal Virgin - a great honor at Rome, but one that, as Livy notes, “deprived her of the hope of offspring.”

But then a miracle occurred. The god Mars came down and lay with Rhea Silvia, and she gave birth to twin boys, Romulus and Remus. Numitor, finding this out, ordered that she be bound and cast into prison, and that the infants be placed in a basket and cast into the Tiber.

These things were done, and the basket containing the infants came to shore in what at that time was a desolate wilderness. However, a thirsty wolf, coming down from the mountains for water, heard the cries of the babies and went to them – “in the cave, sacred to Mars”. She offered them milk and the shepherd Faustus, master of the royal flock, later found the babes peacefully suckling and the wolf gently licking them. The ancient Greek scholar Plutarch, who had a strong interest in Roman matters, notes that a woodpecker also fed and watched over them. The wolf and the woodpecker were also special animals associated with Mars, thus underscoring both the connection of the twins to the war god and his protection of them, and – again – the extreme importance

of Mars energy for protecting the city that was to come.

The lads were raised by the shepherd and his wife, and when they came to manhood, learning of their ancestry, they deposed Aemilius and reclaimed the kingship. They decided to found a city

in the place where they had been cast out to die and had miraculously been rescued. [\[75\]](#)

The Founding of Rome

Romulus and his brother Remus read the omens of the birds. Remus received a flight of six birds, Romulus twelve. So it was Romulus who became the founder of his eponymous (i.e., named after him) city Rome.

The first century B.C. poet, scholar, and antiquarian, Ovid, describes the process of the city founding in his *Fasti* (“Festivals”):

A fitting day was chosen, on which he would mark out the city walls with a plough.

It was the time of the sacred festival of the Parilia. From then on the work proceeded.

A ditch was dug down to bedrock, fruits were thrown into the depths,

And from the neighboring area alone earth was sought.

The ditch was filled with earth, and once it was full an altar was placed upon it,

And, once the fire had been kindled, the new hearth fulfilled its function.

After that, pressing down on the plough handle, he marked out the walls with a furrow,

A white cow pulled the plough along with a snow-white bull. [\[76\]](#)

It was traditional for Roman cities, probably following an earlier Etruscan model, to mark out their walls in this ceremony. Plutarch, a 1st century A.D. Greek writer much interested in Roman history, in his “Life of Romulus” describes the city founding as follows:

Romulus ... set to building his city; and sent for men out of Tuscany, who directed him by sacred usages and written rules in all the ceremonies to be observed, as in a religious rite. First, they dug a round trench about that which is now the Comitium, or Court of Assembly, and into it solemnly threw the first fruits of all things either good by custom or necessary by nature; lastly, every man taking a small piece of earth of the country from whence he came, they all threw them in together. This trench they call, as they do the heavens, “mundus.” Making it their center, they described the city in a circle around it.

Then the founder fitted to a plough a bronze ploughshare, and, yoking together a bull and a cow, drove himself a deep line or furrow round the bounds. Those who followed had the task of making sure that whatever earth was cast up [by the act of ploughing] should be turned inwards, towards the city, so that none of this cast-up earth lay outside [the furrow].

With this line they described the wall, and called it “pomoerium,” that is, “post murum” “after (or beside) the wall.” And where they designed to make a gate, there they took out the ploughshare, carried the plough over, and left a space. For this reason, they consider the entire wall to be holy, except where the gates are. [\[77\]](#)

The *sulcus primigenius*, or “first furrow,” described by both Ovid and Plutarch, thus creates a consecrated circle, within which the city lies. This sense of consecrated space within and wilderness or untamed, dangerous space without, came up when we considered Mars, the protector god of the Romans, whose task it was to protect the city from dangers. As such, as we have seen, his temple lay outside of the pomoerium - outside of the consecrated city walls.

The lighting of the sacred hearth marked the consecration of the city. This was a way of welcoming Vesta, goddess of the hearth and home, and the hearth itself, the energy center of the city, into the very foundation of the city.

The Sacred Circle: The Mandala

The circular pattern may be considered a mandala, or centering and ordering energy pattern.

As mentioned above, the *sulcus primigenius*, the “first furrow”, was the symbolic energy vessel by which, and within which, the city was founded. All later Roman colonies shared in this ritual of founding. As Eckstein notes in his 1979 article on the *sulcus primigenius*, most scholars tended to subordinate this highly important symbolic, religious act to the actual physical/material founding of the city. Yet there are ample indications among the ancient Roman writers themselves that they considered the *sulcus primigenius* the moment when the city truly came into being.^[78] The forming of the sacred circle, though on a physical level just, literally, a line in the soil, became an energy container with profound significance.

The *sulcus primigenius* is, essentially, a mandala, a centering and containing energy pattern. A mandala is a geometric shape, usually a circle, a square, or a circle and a square put together (sometimes called “squaring the circle”) that helps an individual, and, as here, a community or even an entire culture, to experience an energy of centering and ordering. In Jungian psychotherapy and analysis, these patterns sometimes emerge spontaneously in dreams, in visions, and/or in drawings or paintings related to the depth psychological work. Jung notes that mandalas and mandala-like patterns – also sometimes symbolized by flowers, which are themselves a symbol of the Self – often occur when the psyche is out of balance, experiencing chaos, and needs to re-center. The psyche, a self-regulating energy pattern which always seeks balance and unity, seeks to re-center at such time, and produces mandalas as a way of recentering.

Jung, in his commentary on the ancient Chinese alchemical text, “The Secret of the Golden Flower”, which was translated by German Chinese scholar Richard Wilhelm and which was Jung’s first exposure to alchemy, points out that mandalas may be drawn, and they may also be moving mandalas. For instance, they may be danced.^[79] The drawing of the *sulcus primigenius* around every new Roman city – based, as the ancient

Romans themselves believed, on Etruscan usage and wisdom – was also a mandala.^[80] In the legendary founding of Rome, Romulus, the new king, represents all of Rome’s citizens as he draws the mandala, the protective, ordering line and energy principle around the newly founded city.

For both the individual and the community the mandala can have a powerful energy effect. As Jung notes:

The mandala symbol is not only a means of expression, but works an effect. It reacts upon its maker. Very ancient magical effects lie hidden in this symbol, for it derives originally from the “enclosing circle,” the “charmed circle,” the magic of which has been preserved in countless folk customs. The image has the obvious purpose of drawing a *sulcus primigenius*, a magical [first] furrow around the center, a *templum* or *temenos* (sacred precinct) of the innermost personality, in order to prevent “flowing out.” or to guard by apotropaic [warding-off] means against deflections through external influences. [\[81\]](#)

Thus the mandala acts both to keep protected the innermost, most sacred parts of the psyche and community - a function fulfilled by the inner storeroom in the temple of Vesta, as discussed in a previous chapter - and to prevent any “deflection” from true path imposed from without - a function fulfilled by the protective energy of Mars. The Roman *sulcus primigenius* also symbolized both the energies of Vesta and of Mars in the foundation of the city.

The Mandala and the Self

Here we need to discuss an additional fundamental Jungian concept, that of the Self. As we saw in Chapter 2, the ego is the center of consciousness – what each of us calls “I”. It is personal, based and limited in time and space. The Self, by contrast, is a transcendental, superordinate reality that in its basic energy is universal and eternal, beyond time and space. Jung wrote that “the ego goes around the Self like the earth around the Sun.” The Self is also that “place” in the psyche where the image and energy of the Divine appears.

The Self has many symbols, including flowers, seeds, and the sacred stone of transformation, the *lapis*, of the alchemists. One such symbol is also the mandala. It both protects the self and symbolizes the Self. Jung notes that by means of the mandala the attention or the interest of ego-consciousness is brought back to an inner, sacred domain, which is the source and goal of the personality and which contains the unity of consciousness and

of life.

For Jung himself, the mandala emerged as a healing energy during his “confrontation with the unconscious,” as he calls it in his *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*.^[82] This was a time when Jung discovered the archetypal images and energies of the collective unconscious in his own psyche. The energy was so huge and the realizations so shattering that at several points Jung doubted whether he would emerge from this confrontation with his sanity. It was only his anchoring to outer reality, Jung says - his family, his medical practice - that kept him grounded - that, and his emerging connection to the energy of the mandala.

Like all Swiss men of military age, Jung served in the Swiss army in World War I - in his case, as the commandant of a prisoner of war camp. During his years there, every morning he would draw a mandala. He came to be able to understand, by the shape and configuration of the mandala, what his own energy configuration, his own psychic “weather,” would be for the day. When psychic unity was lost, the mandala helped Jung to recenter and to find it again.

Similarly, a story is told of O Sensei, the founder of aikido, that when he was serving as a soldier in the Sino-Japanese War in the early twentieth century, his energy awareness was so acute that he was able to sense the passage of bullets and could avoid them. That level of centeredness is how he survived the war. It is also told of O Sensei that his students once asked him how he maintained such perfect centeredness and balance. He is supposed to have said something like the following: “I don’t. I get off-balance all the time. But I can get back into balance again very quickly.” Whether or not he used an actual image of a mandala, it is clear that O Sensei and many other spiritual masters are indeed able to “get back into balance very quickly” by relying on the same kind of energies.

In the life of the individual, the emergence of mandala patterns – one or more circles, concentric circles, squares surrounded by circles and vice-versa, the Native American medicine wheel pattern of a cross within a circle, the circumambulation (walking around) of a circle or a square, and similar patterns - both herald and heal the chaotic

energies which may emerge when the contents of the collective unconscious break through into consciousness. They help the psyche to return to the archetype of order, and they also help to focus energy within the safe boundaries of a holy space. In ancient Greece, this was called a *temenos* - the sacred courtyard or other enclosed area where sacred ritual and experience was protected, contained, and bounded.

On a psychological level, for many individuals, drawing or “dancing” a mandala is thus more than an interesting or even powerful energy exercise. As Jung notes in *Aion*, when one is cut off from one’s roots, “anamnesis of the origins” – returning to one’s roots – “becomes a matter of life and death.”^[83] The roots about which Jung is writing cannot only be personal roots. They must also be archetypal roots that go beyond the personal. In this sense, they are similar to the Zen koan: “Show me your original face before you were born.” In its focusing of energy and return to the true center of one’s very being, the mandala may perform this vital, lifesaving service.

Protecting the Sacred: The Founding of Rome

Yet it is not enough to simply set up the sacred circle. The mandala of centering and healing must also be protected. Here too we can learn from the mythology of the founding of Rome.

After the *sulcus primigenius* has been ploughed, Romulus prays:

This voice of the king [was heard]: “Be present, Jupiter, and father Mars, and Mother Vesta,
To the founder of the city [i.e. to Romulus, who is speaking],
And whatever gods it is religiously proper for to be present, turn [to us], all of you:
May this work arise to me with your [favorable] omens.

[...]

He prayed, [and] with thunder Jupiter gave omens from the left side,
And from the left lightning bolts were sent from the pole of the sky.
Having rejoiced in the omen, the citizens set up the foundations,

And within a very short time there was a new wall.^[84]

After the symbolic sacred circle has been drawn, enclosing and protecting the new city, a first physical symbol is set up – a low wall. Romulus orders Celer the centurion (in the ancient Roman army, a centurion commanded a unit of one hundred men) to keep a strict watch over this wall:

Celer was to keep watch – Romulus himself called Celer to this task.

“These,” Romulus said, “Celer, are your concerns. Keep good watch!

Let no one go through either the walls or the ditch which has been dug with the ploughshare.

Whoever rashly does such things – kill him.”^[85]

The invasion of sacred space is a serious thing – so serious that Romulus commands that such a transgressor be killed. On an energy level, the destruction of the boundedness of an individual personality is a terrible thing, as discussed in Chapter 4. On a physical level, the early Christians of the fifth century A.D., threatened by Germanic hordes which eventually destroyed the Empire, had a dilemma when these invasions began. The Master teaches us to turn the other cheek. Does this apply to someone who, as the Psalmist says in Psalm 37, “seeks [one’s] very life”? Is self-defense – and defense of the Self – permissible? Saint Augustine, bishop of Hippo in a Roman colony in North Africa at the very beginning of this terrible time, around 400 A.D., developed the concept of a “just war”. To open oneself to self-destruction is not the proper way. It is not only proper, it is obligatory to defend oneself. Though there were dissenters, this point of view was ultimately accepted. It did not save the Roman Empire – it was too late for that – but it did save countless lives then and over the centuries to come.

On an individual energy level, the violation of the sacred boundaries of personality and spiritual home need to be taken with the utmost seriousness, and protected in all ways possible. Mythically, the Irish sacred space of Tara was burned down every year by the demon Aillen – rebuilt, burned down, rebuilt, burned down, over and over again - until the hero Finn finally came and was able to prevent its destruction. Protecting the sacred is an absolutely essential task. It is the task of Mars, the warrior protector god. It is the task of Romulus, son of Mars, founder of Rome. And it is the task of all of us, who, in ways both large and small, do our best to protect the sacred in our lives.

Unfortunately, the one who ignores Romulus's injunction and derides the sacred is Romulus's own brother, Remus:

Remus didn't know about this command. He began to express contempt for the low walls,
And to say: "The people will be kept safe by means of THESE?!"

He leapt across. Celer killed this rash man with a rake. [...]

When the king learned of these things, he swallowed the tears that were rising up inside
And held the hurt closed up in his chest.

He didn't want to cry openly and kept up a brave example.

"Thus," he said, "let every enemy go across my walls."^[86]

On an archetypal level, Romulus is setting strict energy boundaries that are defied at the peril of the one who scorns and ridicules them. Though it may not seem so for a while – days, years, sometimes generations – the sacred has a way of protecting itself. It is the duty of the individual to have conscious awareness of the sacred in his or her life, and to do his or her best to protect it.

Protecting the Sacred in Star Trek: The Next Generation

Another example of protecting the sacred comes in a context where it is, at least initially, not so clear what the sacred is. In the following retelling of a *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode, we see a situation where a young man who was initially very certain of his path has to totally let go of what he thought was the right way for him. For him, this was a form of spiritual homelessness – a kind of liminality from which he emerged into a new way of life.

In one of the last episodes of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, which aired in 1994, Dr. Beverly Crusher's son Wesley, who had been portrayed as a gradually maturing science genius throughout the seven years of the series, is in his senior year at Starfleet Academy, getting ready to graduate in a few months. But the cheerful, eager, if

naïve, teenager of previous years has morphed into a sullen, irritable young man. No one knows what his problem is.

The Enterprise has been sent to a planet inhabited by Native Americans, which has just, as part of a negotiated peace, been transferred from the Federation to another domain. It is the Enterprise's unenviable task to empty the planet of its human inhabitants, even against their will. The Native Americans have lived there for centuries and have a long spiritual tradition and connection to the land. And, strangely, of the entire crew of the Enterprise, it is Wesley whom they notice. Their shaman tells Wesley that he has foreseen Wesley's coming. Wesley then visits the planet, comes "by chance" to the shaman's home, and is led by the shaman on what the episode calls a "vision quest".

It is certainly a profound visionary experience for Wesley. He sees a vision of his dead father, Jack Crusher, who had been a Starfleet officer and who had died in the line of duty. Jack tells his son: "You've come to the end, Wesley." Wesley, puzzled, says: "The end? The end of what?" Jack merely repeats: "You've come to the end. Don't follow me any further." Wesley goes off to ponder this.

In the meantime, tensions have escalated between the Enterprise and the Native Americans. Lieutenant Commander Worf is sent down to the planet's surface to begin surveying it for the eventual takeover. The Native Americans are unaware of Worf's purpose in this. Wesley tells the Native Americans what is going on. Like Mark in C.S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*, Wesley is choosing a side. And – like Mark – Wesley is not entirely conscious at the time of the profound impact of his choice. ^[87]

Called before Captain Picard, Wesley is severely reprimanded for his behavior. Captain Picard ends by saying something like, "You cannot be a Starfleet officer and do things like this." Wesley responds quietly, "I know, sir. That's why I'm resigning from Starfleet Academy." Wesley pulls off the Starfleet insignia from his uniform, places it on Captain Picard's desk, and quietly leaves the room. That quiet, simple act has great ceremonial significance. Wesley has left Starfleet and (as discussed in Chapter 2) gone into liminality, the in-between place of not knowing, of being neither in the old nor in the new. At this point, there is no sense of what is next for Wesley. He

has left the easy path – which was wrong for him. He is following his vision, but he does not know yet where it will lead. He knows the “away”, but not yet the “to”.

Wesley goes down to the planet one more time. The situation has escalated to the point of rioting and physical violence. Wesley wavers and doesn’t know which side to choose now, what to do. At this point the Native American shaman – who had been absent – appears once more and morphs, physically, into the Traveler – a mysterious human-appearing being who came once before and told Dr. Crusher and Captain Picard that Wesley was capable of far more than it seemed. The Traveler has mysterious powers and is able to freeze the action and to give Wesley the choice: to become embroiled in a conflict not his own, or to join the Traveler on a (in an extended sense) shamanic path. Like Aeneas, Wesley too realizes that he has been “building someone else’s city”, and – having left Starfleet - becomes the Traveler’s student. The “to” of the vision – its goal, its telos, Wesley’s life purpose - has now become clear.

However ineptly, it is Wesley’s openness to his vision – something far beyond his experience – and Wesley’s attempt to reveal the truth to a people he has come to care for that both protect the sacred and make possible Wesley’s own sacred path. As the episode ends, a truce has been negotiated whereby – although the new political forces retain their political sovereignty over this planet – the Native Americans are allowed to remain. And Wesley – a much older, more centered, Wesley, neither naively cheerful nor sullenly bitter, who has perceived, acknowledged, and protected the sacred, both for himself and for others – leaves with the Traveler to embark upon his sacred shamanic path.

Chapter 8 - The Sacred Stranger

For I am a stranger with You,

A wanderer like all my fathers. [\[88\]](#)

My Story, continued

In the previous chapter, we saw how Wesley Crusher, in his final year at Starfleet academy, sullen, confused, and bitter, is led to an understanding of the sacred by a Native American shaman (or someone portrayed as such). One of the most moving points in the story is when the shaman is talking about the sacred and Wesley asks, “What is sacred?” The shaman answers: “Everything is sacred: the plants, the trees, the animals, the earth. And,” the shaman adds, looking right at him, “YOU are sacred Wesley.”

Wesley is clearly taken aback by this and says: “Huh – that’s one word that no one has ever applied to me.” It is then that the shaman invites Wesley to go on the “vision quest”.

I, too, have wondered over and over again, in the midst of chaos and adversity: How can I see this time – and myself – as sacred? What, then, happened to me – to my own sense of sacredness – and particularly to my own sense of sacred home?

Fast forward to 2010. After living for over five years in a blessedly stable setting, my landlady/housemate, after thirty years of living in the same home, teaching at the same school, was laid off in one fell swoop along with several other teachers. She decided to move out of state to be with her family. Once more I was looking for housing – not by my choice. On the plus side, I was now part of a different church community, one that accepted my financial poverty and helped me when – once in 2006, once in 2007 – it again looked like I might again become imminently homeless for financial reasons. On the minus side, I had no financial assets and thus no security deposit to rent another room. However, at the last minute, I was able to find a converted closet in a home in the same area. At first it seemed like a miracle. No security deposit was required. But then the shadow side of the situation revealed itself: an energy of rigid New Age spirituality and extreme prejudice. After having been there for three weeks, having paid rent for the first month in advance, I was given three days’ notice to leave.

Three days. During those three days I prayed and studied Scripture more than ever. In his letter to the Philippians, Saint Paul says: “Don’t worry about anything, but in all things, with prayers and beseeching (orationibus et obsecrationibus) make your requests known before God. And the peace of God, that surpasses

all understanding, will protect your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”^[89]

I tried to follow this, along with another piece of advice from the New Testament, to “stand in prayer day and night.” I did my best to “make my requests known before God.” I also informed my pastor of this horrendous situation and asked for her help.

On the following Sunday, I told my story during the time of community prayer. To my astonishment and relief, after the service there was an outpouring of compassion and concern. This time, I was not given a few Web printouts and passed from one uncomfortable assistant minister to the next. This time, two people in the congregation – one with a tiny studio apartment – offered me temporary housing. One person also said he would do his best to ask around. And one congregation member, recently widowed, who had an extra room in her home, offered me housing for a longer period of time. Truly, this time, “I was a wandering stranger and you took me in.” After six months, I was fortunate to find, in March 2011, a housing share that hopefully will be somewhat more permanent, but which – because of circumstances - cannot be entirely permanent.

And, truly, as Saint Paul says, “We are cast down, but not destroyed.” The abusers – whether financial abusers, as throughout the high tech layoffs, and beyond, when the only jobs available were exploitative low-paying “contract” jobs that I had to take for sheer basic survival, to have a roof over my head and food on the table; or spiritual, in this most recent experience – can try to destroy the connection to the sacred. But they can never destroy the sacred itself.

The systemic problem of homelessness has also not vanished. I am luckier than many, if not most, homeless people. This time my period of actual homelessness was only a few hours. But they were gut-wrenching hours, as I wondered where I would sleep that night and what would happen to me – and whether I would survive. The problem still remains of a culture that has created a housing situation where relatively affluent people – as I once was, and perhaps will be someday again – end up paying over a quarter of a million dollars in rent over a thirty-year period because they can find no way to save up a down payment.

This is not the end of the story. But in this final chapter – for now – we will consider the concept of the sacred stranger – a concept which Western culture once had, which drastically reduced the kind and extent of homelessness, and which perhaps can provide a key energy element to make this culture a more gentle, compassionate, and accepting place for the “stranger in our midst.” For sometimes that stranger is me. And someday that stranger is – or may be - you.

Before the Bible

And care for the wandering stranger/For you were wandering strangers in the land of Egypt.

Modern American culture sees homelessness as a fate worse than death, its inhabitants as utter failures who have been rejected by God and man. This is a projection of the cultural shadow, which we considered in detail in Chapter 2. Yet not all cultures are alike. Some, both ancient and modern, see, not permanent homelessness, but some form of culturally-sanctioned and time-limited wandering and homelessness, as an experience of the sacred.

Please note that this is NOT intended to mollify or minimize the experience of homelessness. For most people, however brief, it is horrendous. Yet — despite the cultural scapegoating of the homeless, if the experience can be endured – AND passed through – in an initiatory way, some healing can be found.

A permanent homeless underclass, as we have seen, is maintained for psychocultural reasons of shadow projection by this entire culture. Gaining the cultural consciousness to humbly acknowledge, take back, and dissolve this projection will not be easy. But it can be done, one day at a time, one step of consciousness at a time. And it is vital for those of us on the receiving end of this horrible shadow/scapegoat projection to learn to disidentify from it and to affirm our dignity and our sacredness.

Another important operative word is “time-limited”. Just as there is a powerful difference between the time-

limited and clearly contained experience of what Jung calls an “artificial psychosis” in the Jungian meditative practice of active imagination,^[90] where the archetypal contents are experienced by a conscious, grounded ego, and a psychotic episode that swallows up the personality so that there is no observing ego to ground and integrate – or close the door to – these powerful energies, so too there is a profound difference between the contained and sanctified forms of temporary homelessness described in this chapter and the permanent, cruel, life-destroying, shadow form of secular homelessness which this culture inflicts on all those who fail its financial challenges and “fall through the cracks” - sometimes to their deaths.

The ancient Mediterranean culture - upon which the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition is based - enshrined the concept of the sacred stranger. This is carried over into the Biblical realm. The author of Psalm 39 in the Old Testament says: “For I am a stranger/A wanderer like all my fathers”. The New Testament author of the Letter to the Hebrews says in Chapter 13 that many who have taken in such wandering strangers have, in fact, cared for “angels unawares.”^[91]

A thousand years later, in the Middle Ages, as Will Durant points out in *The Age of Faith*^[92] churches, mosques, and synagogues opened their doors to the homeless so that no one was ever without at least basic shelter. In modern American culture, ten of thousands of buildings – schools and universities, office buildings, religious institutions – lie dark, shut, and unused at night, locking out the millions of homeless people to whom they similarly could offer basic shelter. But no doubt this would be illegal under current zoning regulations, whose primary purpose is not the health and safety of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized in our society, but the rights of property owners – those whom Ursula LeGuin in *The Dispossessed*^[93] calls “the propertarians”. I have very little property myself, but what little I do have I want to have protected. I am not advocating the abolition of property rights. But there must be a balance here that sees food and shelter as basic human rights. The Middle Ages were guilty of many horrendous forms of human rights abuse, but dumping out the homeless into the street to die was not one of them.

This regard and compassion for the homeless goes back at least four thousand years. It has been lost over the

past few centuries, as we saw in Chapter 2, along with the rise of the “Protestant ethic” of the centrality of work and money. Certainly it has been radically lost over the past generation, as the hippies of the 1960s and early 1970s segued into the yuppies of the 1980s and beyond, and the dreams and the ideals of inclusiveness of “the Great Society” morphed into the greed and callousness of the 1980s and beyond.

As Cyrus Gordon points out in *Before the Bible*, , the entire Mediterranean area shared a common culture in Biblical/Homeric times, approximately throughout the second millennium B.C. [\[94\]](#)

Though Gordon does not name it in this way, one aspect of this culture was the concept of the sacred stranger. The wandering stranger - in Biblical Hebrew *ger*, in ancient Greek *xenos*, in Latin *hospes* or *advena* - was held to be sacred and under the protections of the Divine. In ancient Greek culture, for example, the *xenos* was under the protection of Zeus. As he (mostly he) wandered or traveled, he was taken in by the local inhabitants and freely offered food and shelter. Not to do so would offend the gods.

Similarly, in the Book of Exodus, Moses instructs the Hebrew people to care for the wandering stranger (*ger*), “For you were wandering strangers (*gerim*) in the land of Egypt.” Clearly Moses is telling the people to not forget what it feels like to be a wandering stranger: the rootlessness, the sense of abandonment, the fear. Not to forget it – and, if one has never experienced it personally, to have the imaginative compassion to feel it in one’s heart, and to have empathy for the wandering strangers – in whatever form, not always physical – in one’s midst.

This sense of compassion for the disadvantaged and oppressed carried over into New Testament teachings. Jesus, in His teachings in Matthew 25, says:

“I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me [something] to drink.

I was a wandering stranger and you took me in.” [\[95\]](#)

As part of the social ferment of the 1960s and 1970s, when social justice was - at least theoretically - at or near the top of the political agenda, street ministries sprang up to care for that newly burgeoning population which is now called homeless. At that time, for example, a local church in a mostly very affluent community, helped found

a day care center which had scholarships for poor families and outdoor showers so that poor and homeless families could wash themselves – not housing, but at least help with one basic, fundamental need. But over time, the scholarships gradually ceased to exist. The showers were de-installed, covered over for new facilities for the affluent families who could afford to attend.

In that time, a generation ago, however, in addition to the victims of economic displacement and exploitation, the homeless population was also created by the law of unintended consequences - the deinstitutionalization of “mentally ill” people, who were supposed to be transferred from huge inhuman warehouses to caring community centers. Many mental hospitals were indeed closed or reduced in size. But there were no community centers. As Anthony Stevens points out in his book *Withymead*, the brutal truth is that Western culture just didn’t care enough to help its weakest, fragile, and most needy members with the financial support needed. It cost too much. Instead, they were simply dumped out on the street, to live lives of deprivation and cruelty, or to die. [\[96\]](#)

This has not changed much in the past generation. If anything – as the culture itself has become crueler, harsher, and more uncaring, with fewer and fewer safety nets and more and more contempt for the poor and for those who just can’t “make it” – it has gotten worse. This is cultural devolution. The ancient Mediterranean cultures of two and three thousand years ago had a concept of sanctuary and honored the (sometimes “mad”) sacred strangers, seeing in them those marked by the gods – “angels unawares” far more than we do by and large in this more “enlightened” time.

Sanctuary: Withymead

But there have been exceptions. In *Withymead: A Jungian community for the healing arts*, Anthony Stevens (1986) describes the history and reality of Withymead, a healing community founded in Great Britain during World War II by Gilbert and Irene Champernowne. One of the most important aspects of Withymead was that it was not founded on a traditional mental hospital model. Rather, it was a community where both of the Champernownes, along with several other staff members, lived and worked. People who came for help were not “patients,” but “residents.” Irene had a doctorate in psychology and had trained as a Jungian analyst. Gilbert also

had many years in Jungian analysis.

The model upon which Withymead was based was that the psyche is a self-healing organism, establishing in time its own rhythm and pace if given a nurturing, healing environment in which this could occur. In the service of the emergence of the Self, Withymead provided its residents with Jungian psychotherapy/analysis, art and music therapy, and a beautiful natural setting in a rural area of England.

With the emergence of the Self as the primary concern, Withymead was at the opposite end of the spectrum from mental hospitals that wanted quick, economic “turnover” of “patients.” At Withymead, the residents were encouraged to take the time they needed to listen deep within and to work with the contents emerging from the unconscious in a singularly conscious and respectful fashion.

What does this have to do with home and homelessness? One point that Stevens makes over and over again is the sanctuary aspect of a healing community. Withymead not only took in individuals who were psychologically and spiritually, if not physically, homeless. It kept them as long as they needed in order to heal. If a given resident became unable to pay Withymead’s already fairly low fees (Withymead was subsidized for several years by a foundation), his or her financial problems became the problem of the entire community, which mobilized to help the individual to continue his or her healing experience at Withymead.

This point of view is not only, or even mainly, financial. It comes from a deep respect for each individual, and from an equally deep faith in the miraculous healing powers inherent in the psyche. As Stevens notes:

Following Jung, Irene and her colleagues regarded the human psyche as a homeostatically controlled, self-regulating system, which was capable, given the appropriate conditions, of healing itself. ... The longing for sanctuary Irene saw as a striking example of Jung's self-regulating principle at work. The desire to withdraw from those environmental circumstances which have caused suffering is as evident an expression of the instinct for self-preservation as the desire to leave a sinking ship. It is a necessary preliminary to survival. [\[97\]](#)

The Withymead community believed that “in any mental illness a potentially creative process was at work,” and that it was the task of the individual “to accept and take on the unique meaning of his illness.” (*ibid*, p. 49) In the Jungian tradition, Withymead deeply respected the uniqueness and importance of each individual and each individual's process.

By contrast, the standard view of mental illness

prevailing in orthodox British psychiatry ... has been dominated by the imperative to cater to large populations of mentally sick people as economically as possible. It has attempted to do this by seeking to erase the symptoms of mental illness while neglecting the existential meaning of the individual's suffering and the possibilities it affords for personal growth. Increasingly, [this point of view] conceives patients as commodities to be processed efficiently ... through limited facilities. [\[98\]](#)

Let us listen more closely to Stevens's language. The prevailing institutions are concerned with operating economically, which means conceiving of individuals as commodities to be processed efficiently. In other words, people are made into things. The Terrible Mother, who needs unending meaningless sacrifices, sees nothing but ciphers and plug-in components, like the standard psychiatric point of view described by Stevens. No individual healing is possible in such a context.

By contrast, sanctuary is an aspect of home. The Good Mother, who is deeply connected to the archetype of home, sees each individual, not as a worker who must EARN his or her right to be worthy of home, but as a child of Goddess/God, who needs to be nurtured and honored as an individual. This was Withymead's way.

In antiquity, the temples of Asclepius, the healer god, were likewise sanctuaries to which individuals came for healing experiences, including - much like the process of Jungian psychotherapy and analysis - healing dreams and visions. Stevens, who is himself a psychiatrist and a Jungian analyst, says:

In my professional life, I am confronted time and again by patients on the point of breakdown who ask, “Isn't there somewhere peaceful I could go to get away from everything and have time to sort myself out?” Whenever this happens I lament the demise of Withymead and wish that somewhere [something] like it existed. [\[99\]](#)

As the individual becomes increasingly less valued by dominant Western culture, models of “healing” come to reflect a preoccupation with quickness, speed, and “productivity” - returning the individual to work as soon as possible. In this scenario, all symptoms, as Stevens says, are “erased” - never mind what this does to the individual's unique process of growth and equilibrium. Once again, Weber's thesis that working for money has become the primary, central value of dominant Western culture is being proved in a ghastly way, with terrible consequences for millions of people. On a spiritual level, as happens in Celtic mythology on a yearly basis at the sacred place of Tara, the sacred hall – the sacred process of each individual, beloved of the Divine - is destroyed for nothing.

The collectivization of modern Western culture - in stark and ironic contrast to ancient Western culture, which highly valued the individual within its own cultural parameters - practically guarantees that “the ancient concept of sanctuary and asylum” [\[100\]](#) is lost. Like the homeless population onto whom is projected cultural negativity, the “mentally ill” are no longer seen as sacred individuals within and through whom a god or goddess may be speaking, whom the Good Mother provides for in a home of sanctuary and safety.

Rather, turned into nameless statistics, the Terrible Mother energy wreaks havoc upon countless millions of individuals through the placing of “economics first.” Again, as noted above, and as unlikely – or incomprehensible - as it may seem - and ultimately Withymead *was* destroyed by financial problems and all their attendant circumstances - the lack of financial resources on the part of a resident who needed to stay longer for healing was seen by Withymead as a problem of the whole community, which the whole community needed to solve.

The impact of such a caring philosophy on either the mentally ill or the homeless populations is practically unimaginable. Would that the past two generations had augmented this compassionate and generous aspect of the Good Mother within Western culture, rather than turning over to a huge faceless bureaucracy, valuing only – as Stevens mentions – economics, efficiency, “work”, and the “bottom line” - the “care” of people in desperate need of healing and sanctuary.

Conclusion

This must be an interim conclusion, in the hope that the culture comes to its collective senses and re-incorporates values which were very clear for centuries and millennia of Western – and other – history. They have been lost in the shuffle of greed, desperation, and placing money and work – instead of the Divine – at the center. If money and work become the focus of worship in a godless culture, then we have not heeded Jesus’s warning in the Gospel of Luke: “No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money.”^[101] Yet this lost value of the sacred stranger can be reclaimed, for “the Son of Man has come to seek and to save those who have been lost.”^[102]

There is no economic solution to the problem of homelessness. Rather, the solution lies in reorienting our values to include the sacredness of all individuals, an awareness of the terrible substitution of money and work for the Divine in dominant Western culture, and an understanding of the archetypal roots of homelessness and home. Only when the basic needs of shelter, food, and healing are accepted as basic human rights - and not doled out grudgingly to the “deserving poor” but generously offered to all in need of sanctuary - will we begin to have a society in which everyone is considered sacred and in which everyone has a sacred home.

And – it really is “we”. There is no them. There is only us.

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[A note on bibliography and footnotes: In 2004 I lost all but a tiny fraction of the personal library I had built up over about twenty-five years. After rebuilding it to a small extent over the next several years, I found myself again unable to afford storage space in 2010 and gave away about half of it. Some of those books were used in writing the first draft of this manuscript in 2007. Others are still in spaces not immediately accessible. Also, some of the subsequent research was done onsite at various libraries.

I am currently on disability and experience significant energy fluctuations from day to day that can limit my activities. I've filled in the footnotes as best I could, but some (like Roscher's *Lexikon*, published towards the end of the nineteenth century) do not have exact information online (or at least I couldn't find it). Rather than wait until I could find every single reference – which could add several weeks to the process – I decided to send along the manuscript now after two weeks' work. If there is some interest in the manuscript I can make the additional library trips later on.]

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